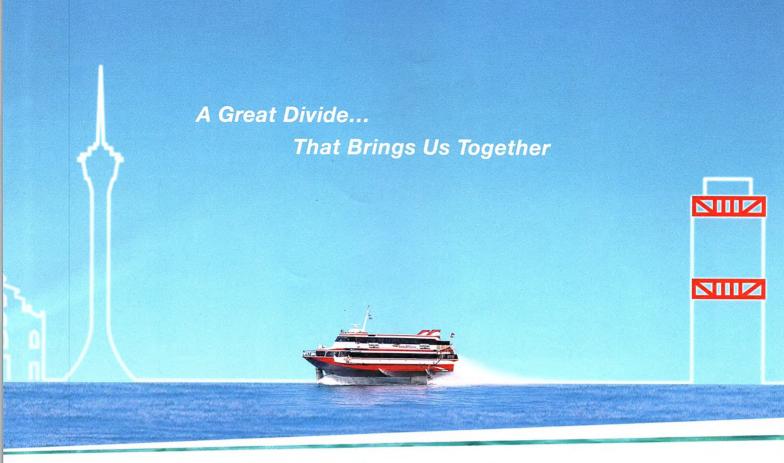


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Ultimate Sea Journey



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The kick-off of the Lhasa-Xigazê branch construction, an extension of the QTR, fell on 1 July this year. A lateral route is also planned from Xigazê to Yadong Port at the China-Sikkim border, which will eventually join up with India's railway system and other parts of South Asia. Then, Lhasa will be a starting point for further journeys.

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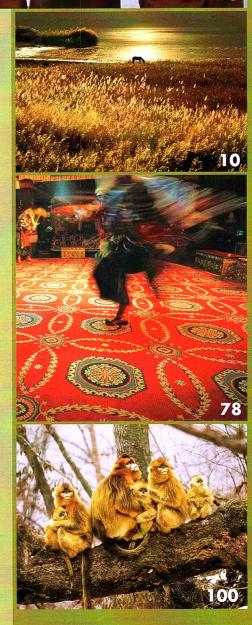
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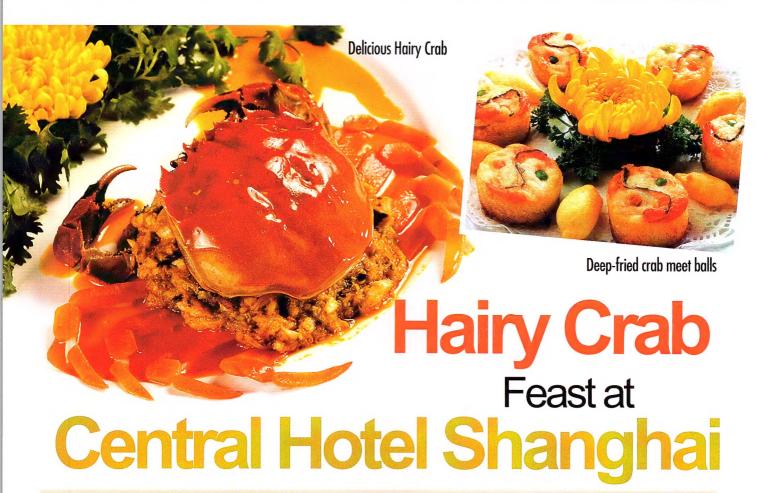
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If you desire to taste the most authentic hairy crabs from the Yangcheng Lake in China's Zhejiang Province, then you have to come to the Central Hotel Shanghai. To hunt for the best crabs in Shanghai, the Banquet Hall of Central Hotel Shanghai is the right place that you must go to.

For years the Banquet Hall located on the 5th Floor of the Central Hotel Shanghai has offered guests unique crab dishes. Especially when it comes to every autumn of the year, the hotel will present 'The Grand Central Hotel Crab Feast' to the public. Marvelous in size with spectacular presentation, a total of 350 guests in capacity, and also on the side are nine distinctly styled private rooms.

The finely decorated banquet possesses 350 seating capacity and nine private rooms which all named in archaic Chinese poetry. This banquet offers crab dishes for whole year and starting from the end of September till the next February, it provides you with the 'Hairy Crab Feast'. During this feast, every dish is made of crabs, and apart from the popular Steamed Hairy Crabs from Yangcheng Lake, other new dishes such as Steamed Crab Meat, Deep-fried crab meat balls, Sauteed shark's fin with crab meat and Steamed dumpling with crab meat are also available.

The reasons for Yangcheng Lake's hairy crabs being so famous are simple, with their huge size and vivid colour, and the abundance of the crab roe, plus the delicate texture of the crab meat, no doubt that their reputation is world renowned.



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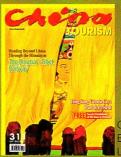
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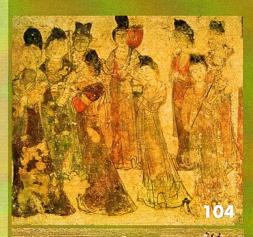
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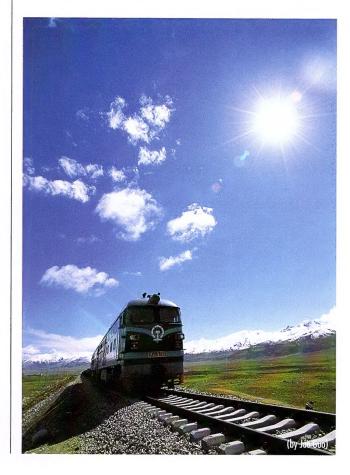
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No. 311 Sep/Oct 2007

These few months we have had more things to celebrate than ever before. In the South, we have the 10th anniversary of the HKSAR, and in the Northwest, the Qinghai-Tibet Railway (QTR), which celebrated its first anniversary in July.

The extension of the QTR through the Himalayas to bordering countries like Nepal and India has become a hot topic. People hold different opinions over whether to develop a place through the train or not. Some anticipate the start of this project for the economic, societal and cultural developments it will surely bring to those places reached by it, while others worry about the effects on their hometowns and the possibility of losing their traditions forever.

Maintaining a good balance between development and preserving history is the main point. Recently, some Hong Kong citizens have become keen to fight for the protection of historical sites in the SAR. Reading the article in this issue about the changes in the former Victoria City (mainly on Hong Kong Island) we may have more sympathy for their actions. Just an hour across the sea, the Macau SAR learned this lesson much earlier and has already turned its historical centre into an unprecedented successful tourist attraction!



#### International Sailing Race in Shenzhen

As announced by the Shenzhen sports bureau, China's first international sailing competition — modelled on the world-famous America's Cup — will be held annually in Shenzhen each October. Co-organized by national and local sports authorities, the inaugural three-day China Cup International Regatta (CCIR) is scheduled to be held in the city's Daya Bay between 19 ~ 21 Oct.

Domestic sailing clubs and dozens of overseas competitors, including those from Australia, Brazil, Britain, France, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and the United States, will be invited. Some 200 to 300 million yuan (US\$26 to 39 million) would be invested over the next three years, which will include a training centre for young sailors. The China Cup is regarded as a dress-rehearsal for the 26th Universiade to be held in Shenzhen in 2011.

Online applications: www.chncup.com

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#### Ancient Xi'an Market to Rise Again

A 1,300-year-old market in Xi'an, capital of Northwest Shaanxi Province, which used to be extremely popular, is being rebuilt.



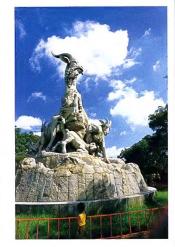
The West Market covers an area of 33 hectares. Its rebuilding costs will be 3.5 billion yuan (\$460 million), and it will be completed in 2010.

The market is being developed in two phases. The first phase which is under construction, will house antique and souvenir shops, a museum, restaurants, reception centers for foreign visitors, and a supermarket.

#### More Air Links to Guangzhou

Japan Airlines Corp, Asia's largest carrier by sales, will add more flights to Guangzhou in southern Guangdong Province and cut its frequencies to Hong Kong as it focuses on more profitable routes.

The airline will raise its Guangzhou service from Narita, its home base, to 14 flights a week from 13 in October, the company said in an e-mailed statement vesterday, Bloomberg News



reported. Its Hong Kong services will fall to 14 flights a week from 17 the same month.

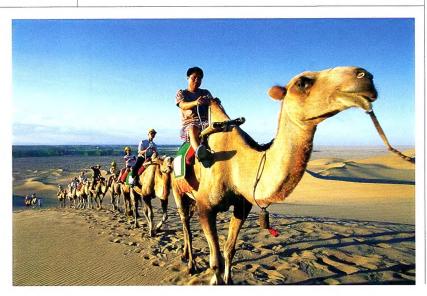
The airline will also reduce its Paris service to seven flights a week from 10 in November, while its Los Angeles route will drop to seven a week from eight in October. The carrier will also start a twice-weekly cargo flight to Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, via Bangkok, from Kansai International Airport, Osaka, in October.

#### China to Establish Ecological Reserve in Dunhuang

China's environmental watchdog has called for the establishment of a national ecological reserve in Dunhuang, Northwest China's Gansu Province, to prevent further environmental deterioration there.

An official with the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) made the appeal after news reports uncovered that the ecological environment in Dunhuang continuously deteriorated.

Dunhuang was once an important site on the ancient Silk Road, a 2,000-year-old trade route that linked Asia and Europe, starting in Xi'an, capital of northwest China's Shaanxi Province, and ending in Europe after passing through southern and central Asian countries.



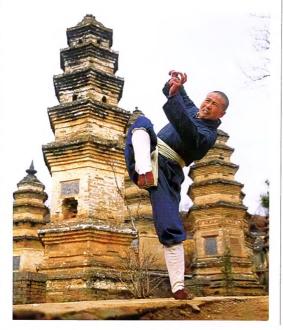
#### Mass Relocation Planned for Shaolin Facelift

China plans to give a large-scale facelift to the Shaolin Temple area in Central Henan Province, where the renowned Shaolin *kungfu* (martial arts) originated.

More than 1,000 enterprises, martial art schools, shops and households covering some 300,000 square metres are scheduled to be moved away from

eight sightseeing areas in the city of Dengfeng, Henan.

Archeological experts will also repair and renovate the dagobas of the 1,500year-old Shaolin Temple in the city. The project, set to be completed by the end of this year, is aimed at clearing away constructions that diminish the image of the eight ancient cultural heritage areas. Three of them, including the Shaolin dagobas and Songyana Academy — one of the four most important schools in ancient China, are vying for the World Heritage status.



#### Metro Line to Overlap with Maglev Route

Under Shanghia's plan to extend metro line 2 to link its two airports with downtown, parts of the line will overlap with the suspended maglev rail extension. Work on the metro line is to be completed before 2010, when Shanghai will host the World Expo.

The extension represents a major reversal from a previous plan, under which the maglev train between Longyang Road and Pudong International Airport was to be extended westward to connect Hongqiao Airport, which handles most of the city's domestic air traffic, before the expo.

The high-speed rail services were intended to facilitate domestic and international flight transfers for visitors to the expo. However, that project was suspended because of cost concerns and noise and pollution worries among local residents.

The existing maglev line, which began operating on December 31, 2002, cost 10 billion yuan (\$1.32 billion). The estimated cost of expanding the maglev line was 6 billion yuan.



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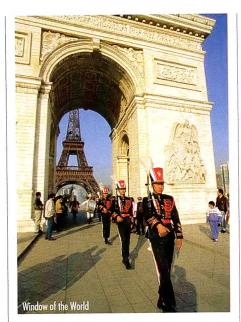
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#### Shenzhen

#### Best Tour Routes in Shenzhen Unveiled

The Shenzhen municipal tourism bureau on Monday announced the best tour itinerary for foreign visitors wishing to see Shenzhen in a period of two or three days.

It was among 12 routes of different kinds unveiled by the bureau yesterday, after a selection process lasting five months. The route for foreigners includes the Lotus Hill Park, the Shenzhen Museum, the Fairy Lake Botanical Garden, Dawan Dwelling, Dafen Oil Painting Village, Splendid China and China Folk Culture Villages, etc.

#### **Aviation**

#### Vietnam facilitates air transport for Chinese visitors

Starting in August, Vietnam has allowed Chinese visitors to Vietnam using entry-exit permits, a much simpler form of visas, to board domestic flights.

Under a new regulation of the Civil Aviation Administration of Vietnam, the Chinese visitors with the permits are now permitted to enter domestic flights in group, not on individual basis. In Vietnam, the visitors are not allowed to use international flights.

Among nearly 2.5 million international arrivals to Vietnam in the first seven months of this year, 320,500 were Chinese visitors, according to the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism. China has been Vietnam's biggest tourism market in recent years.

#### Shaanxi

#### Mt Qinling Panda Habitat Expands

A survey has shown the habitat of giant pandas in the Qinling Mountains in Shaanxi Province has been expanded and their general quality of life improved. Compared with what was found in the previous survey conducted between 1974 and 1977, the habitat has expanded 26 km to the east, 39 km to the west and four km to south and north respectively.

The second survey, conducted between 1985 and 1988, also found that there is an abundant source of bamboo in the mountains. The pandas rely on bamboo for food. With the support of the World Wildlife Fund, the bureau began a project in April last year to gain a better knowledge of the life and habitat of the pandas. It covered 19 panda reserves in 10 counties in southern Shaanxi.

The Qinling Mountains in southern Shaanxi is a major habitat for pandas. The rare species are found only in China.

#### Shipping

#### New Shipping Lines Between Tianjin and US East Coast

The Grand Alliance group, one of the world's shipping giants, has launched a new route between north China's port city of Tianjin and the US east coast.

The Grand Alliance — comprising Hapag-Lloyd Container Line (HLCL), Nippon Yusen Kaisha (NYK), Orient Overseas Container Line (OOCL) and Malaysia International Shipping Corp. (MISC) — has operated eight container vessels on the new line. The new service will cover the ports of Dalian, Qingdao, Ningbo and Shanghai in China, Pusan in the Republic of Korea and New York.

The world's top 20 shipping lines have all opened services at Tianjin Port, which has now more than 100 container shipping lines and trade links with more than 400 ports in some 180 countries and regions, Yu said.

#### Yunnan

#### National Park Built in Shangri-La

China's first national park, the Potatso National Park, was inaugurated in June in Shangri-La, in the southwest province of Yunnan.

The 2,000 sq km national park covers 17 percent of Diqing, an autonomous prefecture mainly inhabited by Tibetans. Its centerpiece sceneries are crystal-clear lakes, undulating mountains and gurgling streams. Now about 69 km of blacktop roads have been built in two major scenic spots, the Shudu Lake and Bita Lake, in Potatso. The roads also serve as fire separation stripes. Plank roads stretch 10 km along the mirror-like lakes to protect the grasslands.

Seven solar-energy powered public toilets and shuttle buses consuming clean energy are also used in the park to minimize pollution. During the past ten months of trial operational, the national park received 600,000 visitors.



#### Beijing

#### Railway Station Sells Tickets in English

Foreigners will find it easier to buy train tickets in the Chinese capital now that the city's major railway station has begun to provide services in English.



Beijing Railway Station in the downtown area will staff two Englishlanguage information and ticket sales windows during the 62-day summer transport period in summer.

The railway station has opened a total of 120 ticket windows during the July and August, including windows for senior citizens and deaf and mute people. Beijing West Railway Station, the capital's busiest, expected a record 7.55 million departures in the two peak summer months with a daily average of 122,000 passengers, up 12.8 percent over the same period last year.

#### **Aviation**

#### Guangzhou-Yangon Flight Opens

The China Southern Airlines recently opened an air route from Guangzhou to Yangon in Myanmar, bringing the total number of air links between China and Myanmar to three.

Becoming the third Chinese airline that flies Yangon using 120-seat Airbus A-319, the China Southern Airlines will have regular flights three days a week — Monday, Wednesday and Saturday after a 30-day promotion period, officials of the airline said.

The opening of the new air route contributes to the enhancement of tourism, trade and economic cooperation and friendship between the two countries.

#### Shanghai

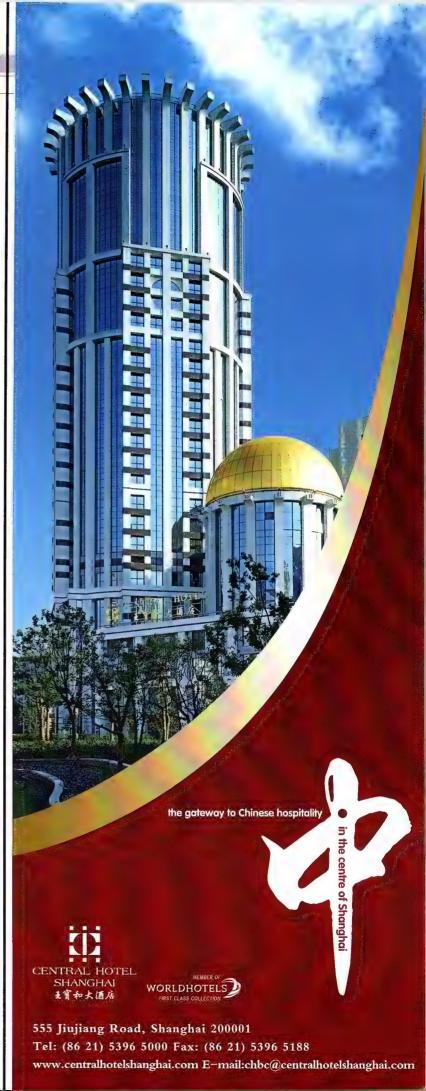
#### Bilingual Maps of Shanghai Free to Take at Pudong Airport

Visitors nowadays who fly from or land at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport will feel free to take copies of a bilingual-versioned Map of Shanghai, designed as a new 'Name Card' for the eastern Chinese metropolis.

The first batch of 300,000 maps of Shanghai has been put on shelves at the airport's entrances and arrivals, and another 700,000 copies will be added later this year. Designed and produced by the Shanghai Surveying Institute, the Chinese-English maps of Shanghai give bilingual introductions to the city's main roads,



transport network, hotels, shopping sites, and locations of foreign consulates. Major tourist attractions are also shown in threedimensional



# Light and Shade of the

Photos & Article · Adam Wong

# Badain Jaran Desert



Badain Jaran Desert, in West Inner Mongolia, China, fascinates photographers. It is a desert on the top of the world. In particular, it boasts a 600-metre sand dune. More amazingly, strings of lakes in all sizes and sparsely populated town are found in the depths of the desert.

- 1. The desert landscape may be monotonous and boring after a while. To shoot a creative and interesting picture, one needs to be a wise and sharp observer. This atmospheric picture captures the moment was shot by lying on the ground and shooting in an upwards angle.
- 2. Some people start to pack their photography gear after sunset. In fact, it is these few fleeting moments that are the best time of the day to shoot a silhouette picture. If you are lucky, you will come across rosy clouds. At this moment, the beauty of nature needs but a click on the shutter.

Located in Alxa Right Banner in West Inner Mongolia (with a small portion in Ejin Banner, Alxa League), Badain Jaran Desert is 47,000 sq km in area. It is the third largest desert in China and the fourth largest desert in the world. The Bilutu Sand Dune at 1,609 metres above sea level and with a relative altitude of 600 metres is reputed to be 'The Qomolangma of Deserts'.

There are altogether 113 lakes in the desert. They are emeralds embedded on the silky texture of the desert.

Amazingly, some people make this vast expanse of desert their home. A small village called Badain Jaran has some 30 households with over a hundred people. It is small in population, but it may be the largest in area in the world.

#### **Transportation:**

The best season to travel to Badain Jaran Desert is from September to November. In summer, the temperature of the desert can go up over 40°C. In winter, it may drop well below zero. In April and May sandstorms rage the area. There are three routes into the desert.

#### To the Desert:

- 1. Fly from Shenzhen to Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region (3 hours; one-way ticket at 1,000 ~ 1,500 yuan), and take a car or bus to Bayan Hot, Alxa Left Banner (2 hours). The next day, take a bus to Ehen Hudag, Alxa Right Banner (about 6 hours; fare: 85 yuan). On the third day, rent a jeep or camels to head into the desert.
- 2. Fly from Shenzhen to Lanzhou, Gansu Province (about 3.5 hours; one-way ticket at 1,200 ~ 1,700 yuan), and take a train from Lanzhou to Jinchang (about 4 to 5 hours). Then take a bus to Right Banner,



3. Fly from Shenzhen to Lanzhou, and rent a car to Right Banner (about 7 to 8 hours). Rent a jeep or camels in Right Banner and then go into the desert.

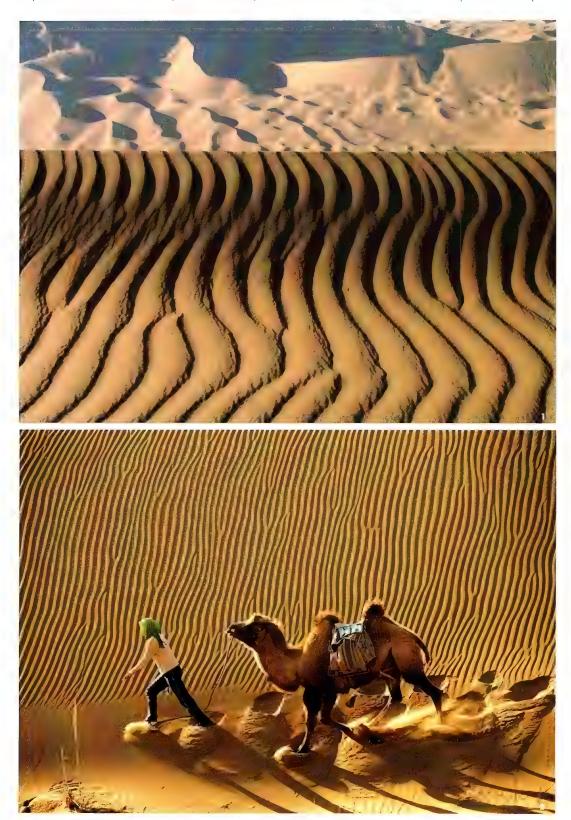


#### In the Desert:

There are two means of transportation to enter the Badain Jaran Desert, 4WD jeep and camel. If you can afford it, use both.

It is best to rent a Beijing jeep rather than an imported 4WD, which is bulky and more likely to

get stranded in the soft flowing sands. A Beijing jeep is light and strong and it is quite cheap to rent. It can deftly negotiate the sand dunes. A piece of valuable advice: DO NOT overestimate yourself in the desert even you are an experienced driver. The landforms of the desert are complicated. It requires





- 1. The texture of a sand dune can be the greatest source of creativity.
- 2. It takes three days to reach the depth of the desert by renting and riding camels, the 'boat of desert.' However, photography fans can use their mounts anytime as models and shoot great pictures.
- 3. At a relative altitude of 600 metres, Bilutu Sand Dune looks imposing. Compared with the elements of nature, men and camels are humble and small.

quick judgment on behalf of the driver to choose a proper route and make decisions — uphill, downhill, speeding up and slowing down. A single careless mistake may result in an accident. Local drivers know about the desert inside and out. Their vehicles are relatively safer.

There is Plan B — a camel ride. It takes over four hours to reach the destination in the desert by car. It takes three days riding on the back of camel to reach the heartland of the desert. As the camel trip is rather long, sufficient food, drinking water, tent, quilt and daily supplies should be taken along.

The camel walks slowly. It can walk for only 20

km a day (six hours a day). The desert topography goes up and down. It usually rests for a while after each two hours. When going downhill, it will jog its way down. If you are unlucky and thrown off from the camel, make sure that you try not to fall down with your hands onto the sand. This will mean wrenched joints or even bone fractures. The correct way is to roll your body onto the ground as the soft sands will absorb the impact. Usually it would not lead any injury. In the evening, the desert is cool and soft. Looking at the dome of the sky with its galaxy of stars, you should enjoy a poetic moment or two on your trip.





 Golden lake, waving reed floss, and a grazing horse... it is a picturesque scene. It is hard to believe it is in a desert. Walking into the dense reeds to shoot a close-up of the flying flossy flowers, one needs to be very careful. Do not get stranded in the marsh.

- The sand dunes by the lakeside and the flying floss show a scene of dreamy beauty in the changing light and shadow.
- 3. At night, one can observe the dome of the sky studded with myriad stars, or stay in the candle-lit tent, having some private romantic moments.

#### Scenic Spots and Camping Sites:

**Base camp**: The base camp is located at the edge of the desert. You can park here, swap jeeps and pump up your tyres (the air of the tyre is released by half when the jeep is stranded) and fueling. It is 76 km away from Right Banner.

Badain Lake: The lake is 15 km away from the base camp by the desert route. By the lakeside there are Mongolian tent hostels. Each bed is 50 yuan. A Mongolian tent restaurant is available. Badain Lake is the only fresh water lake. The camel caravan will pause here to let the beasts drink before the caravan goes ahead.

**Nuo'ertu**: Nuo'ertu Lake is the largest and most beautiful lake in Badain Jaran Desert. Of 2,200 mu (1 mu = 1/15 of a hectare) in area and 28 metres deep, its beautiful scenery resembles that of Jiangnan area, south of the Yangtze River, a place well-known for its graceful beauty. Wind rustles the flossy reeds by the lakeside. In the distance, apple

trees and jujube trees are laden with fruit. The blue lake water is saline and cannot be drunk. Digging a hole about 10 metres away from the lake, we saw gushing fresh water. It was just amazing. The hostess here was called Qiqige. Owning dozens of rooms and tents, she is the wealthiest person in Badain Jaran. Each bed costs 30 ~ 50 yuan, and a meal, 100 yuan. We considered it a bargain. Some foreign visitors believed they had found 'heaven' and decided to linger in the place. Room reservation: (483) 643 0788

**Bilutu:** It is about 10 km away from Nuo'ertu. It boasts the world's highest sand dune. Of 1,609 metres above sea level and a relative altitude of nearly 600 metres (from the foot to the top), Bilutu Sand Dune is reputed to be the 'Qomolangma of Deserts.' As the surface of the sand dune is soft, it is a good idea to wear a pair of mountain boots, and carry an alpenstock, water canteen and simple photography gear. In other words, take a light load

on the road. If you are strong, you can reach the top of the sand dune in half an hour. On top of the dune you can see seven lakes of different sizes in the distance.

Miaohu (Temple Lake), or Miaohai: It is the centre of Badain Jaran and the seat of the village committee. Three households live here. It is considered the busiest place in the desert. There is only one household by each other lake. Badain Temple, with a history of over 200 years stands by the lake. A younger monk now runs the place as the older monk has retired. It is the only temple in the desert. Many adherents come to pay tribute at the

temple. With the addition of visitors, the place is getting quite boisterous.

Bagajilin: It is only 5 km away from Miaohu. The family of the village head, Aoqi'er, is by the lakeside. In the front is the Bilutu Sand Dune. The natural environment here is plain and primitive. In the home of the village head we saw simple but practical guest rooms and lounge. There was a clay kang, a brick-and-mortar bed with a hearth underneath. It was rare in this region. The lodging was the least expensive of the all desert settlements.

Translated by Zhang Boli



#### Travel Tips

Personal protection: If you go in the autumn, it is not necessary to take too many clothes. In addition to an UV-resistant quick-drying coat and pants, one needs to bring an extra thick wool/cotton coat and pants to keep warm at a temperature -10°C in the evening. Gloves, a sun bucket with a rear neck flap, sunglasses and slippers are a must-have. In the desert it is just common to have no way of taking a shower for a few days. It is suggested to bring enough wet wipes to wash your face.

As the UV radiation in the desert is strong, UV protection is indispensable. Note not to get bitten by



mosquitoes when admiring the lakeside reeds and flossy flowers. Mosquito repellent is your amulet. Of course, a water canteen is something you should bring anywhere anytime.

If you are riding camels into the desert, you need to camp for two or three nights in the desert. A large tent can be rented. However, it is strongly recommended to

bring your own sleeping bag. If it is too cold at night, you can borrow a quilt to stack on the sleeping bag. Fruit and medical care are luxuries in the desert. It is suggested that you bring vitamins A, B and C. Other medications to cure flu and loose bowels would also be handy to bring along.

#### Travel agency and car renting:

**Badain Jaran Desert Adventure Travel Agency**Tel: (483) 602 1618 Fax: (483) 602 1981

Badain Jaran Desert Qomolangma Travel Agency

Tel: (483) 686 6888 Fax: (483) 602 4888

Contact person: Mr Ao'erqi (in pinyin) who can arrange a car, camels and lodging.

Tel: (483) 643 0671 Mobile: (86) 135 6532 9678 (leave messages to Ms Narenhua)

Cost: A two-day car cruise pockage (one entry and one exit only) is 1,600 yuan. A multi-day package is priced at 600 ~ 700 yuan per day (including gas and driver). One camel can be rented at 120 yuan per day. One traveller needs two camels, one for riding and one for baggage. The cost of a camel tender is 100

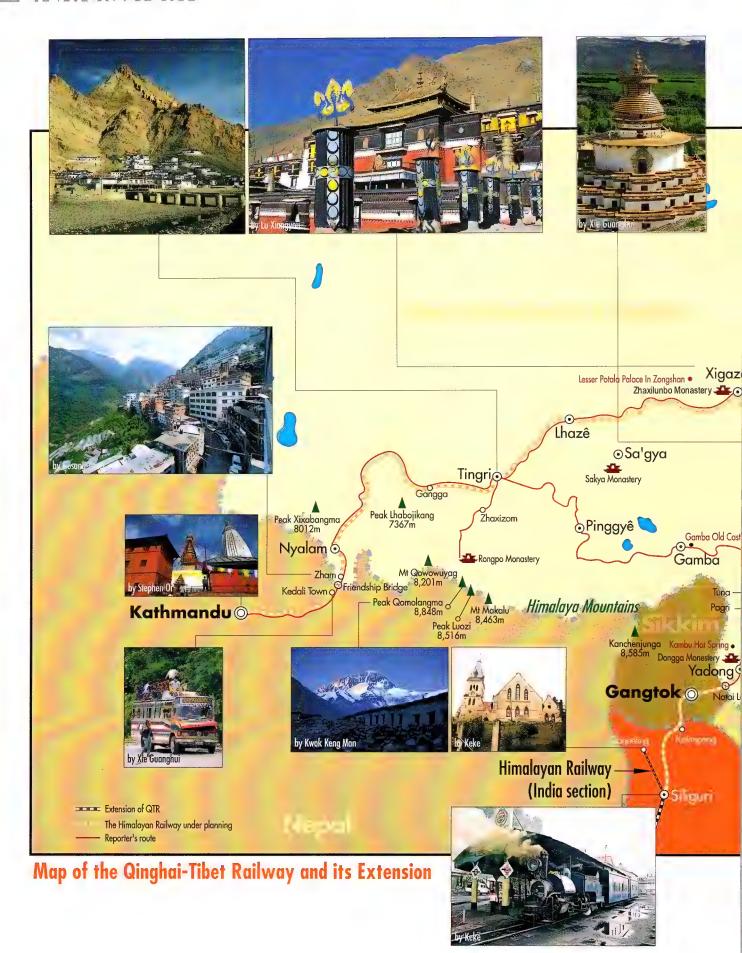
yuan per day. A tent (3 to 4 persons) can be rented at 60 yuan per day. Food is 60 yuan per day for each person. Rice and/or noodles are cooked for breakfast and dinner. Solid food is provided for lunch.

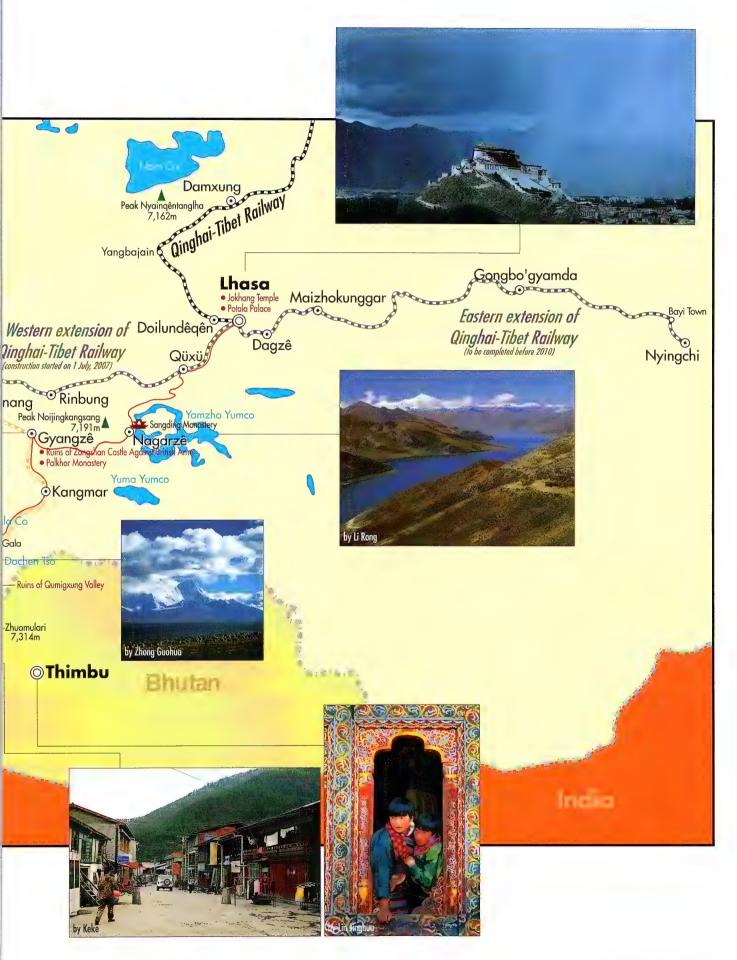


# an End and a Beginning First Anniversary of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway

This year, I July was a special day - the first anniversary of the Ginghai-Tibet Railway and the initial day of the Lhasa-Xigazê branch construction. A law at raute is also planned from Xigazê to Yadong Port at the China-Sikkim border, which will eventually join up with India's railway system and other parts of South Asia. Then these will be a starting point for further journeys as well as a terminus.

The planned railway will link China with India through the Himalayas. When completed, there will be a mighty roar going beyond the opposing geological forces of the Eurasian and Indian plates that will rekindle the spark of friendship between two ancient civilisations. Its significance is far reaching in terms of politics, economy and culture. Our reporters followed the planned lateral route first to Yadong, then went west to Zham, another border town that may have a railway connection. They sent home stories of the captivating landscape and the exotic and yet diverse cultures along the route and in the neighbouring countries of Bhutan, India and Nepal.







1. In summer Yamzhog Yumco reflects diverse shades of blue, which form a fascinating contrast to the golden yellow rape flowers. (by Xie Guanghui)

2. A fashionable young Tibetan by the lake. (by Stephen Or)

3. A foreign tourist practising yoga at the 5,000 metres Kampala Pass. (by Gesang Jimei)

Soon, Lhasa will cease to be the Qinghai-Tibet Railway (QTR) terminus. Instead, it will become the departure station of the railroad going to and through the Himalayas. The Lhasa-Xigazê leg is just one phase of the project. At Xigazê two lateral routes will branch off, one to the port of Zham in Nyalam County on the China-Nepal border and the other to Yadong, Sikkim and eventually the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway of India.

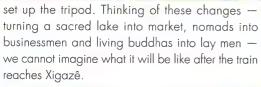
In the early morning, we left Lhasa on our way through Xigazê to Yadong, which is adjacent to Sikkim and Bhutan. To reach Nakartse, we had to climb over the Kampala Pass (5,030 metres). Following the opening of the QTR, there has been an influx of tourists into Tibet, and Kampala Pass has become a 'must-see' location for a bird's eye view of the Yamzhog Yumco (also known as 'Yamdrok Co'),

one of the top three sacred lakes of the Tibetans.

Arriving at the pass viewpoint, we found dozens of tourist coaches there. Previously a ritual site for the Tibetans, it has now become a boisterous souvenir market. Colourfully decorated yaks were led all around by the locals as photo props. The Tibetan mastiff, another symbol of Tibet, was also appropriated for such business. Formerly a fierce guard of the nomads, it is now as tame as a sheep.

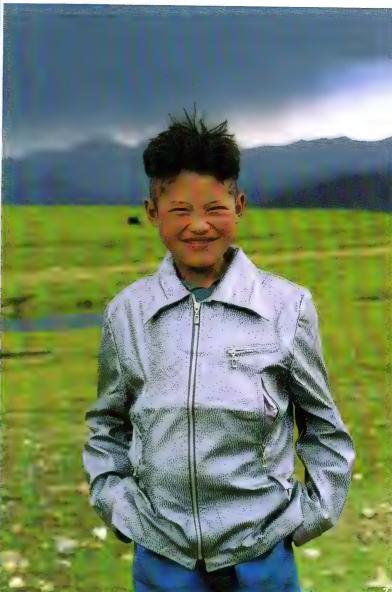
Kampala is undoubtedly the best site for a panoramic view of Yamzhog Yumco. The mountain range is mirrored on the lake surface while Noijinkangsang Snow Mountain stands majestic in the distance. Grassland and rape flower fields grace the side of the lake. Yet, the scenic splendour is being spoiled by the immense number of tourists posing for pictures. We could hardly find a spot to



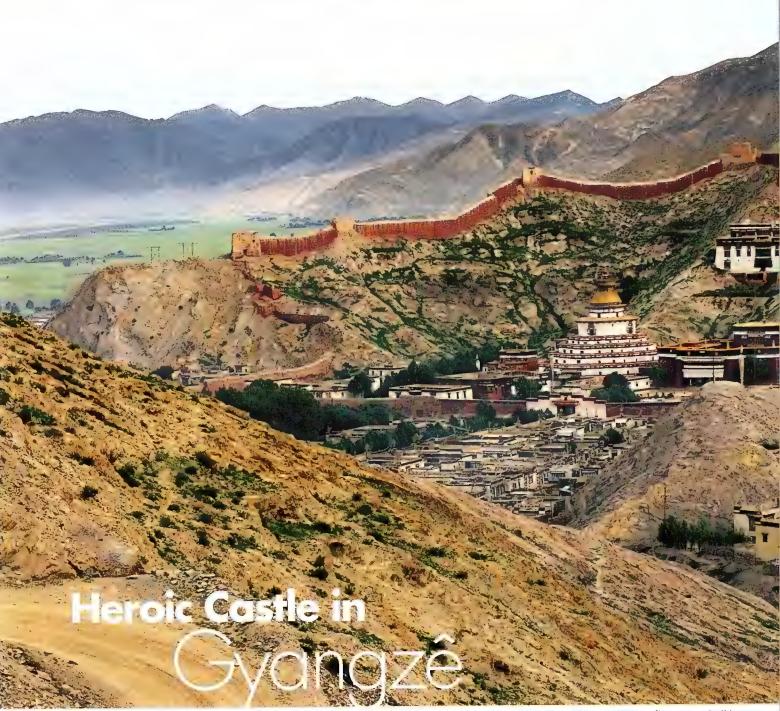


Yamzhog Yumco, 'Swan Lake' in Tibetan, is one of the top three sacred lakes for the Tibetans.

has over 10 islets, and a total coast line of 250 km and area of 638 sq. km. It starts to freeze over around mid November. Being the largest water bird habitat in South Tibet, with plenty of highland fish, means that many migratory birds winter or sojourn here on their way to the Subcontinent.

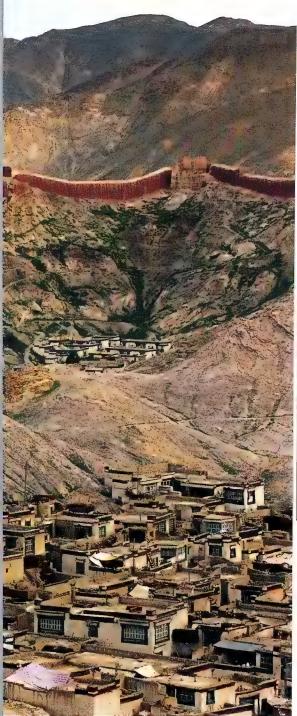






We headed for Gyangzê after lunch at Naargzê. The city of Gyangzê has a 600-year history, much longer than that of Xigazê. In early times it was the capital city of the Sum-pa tribe. Gnam-ri Srong-btsan, father of the most famous Tibetan king Songsten Gampo, defeated Sum-pa. After that, Gyangzê became a fiefdom of the Tibetan nobles. Located to the south of Lhasa, the east of Sa'gya and north of Yadong, it was the hub where Buddhists and traders converged. At the heart of the area's communication network and teeming with diverse cultures, the monasteries here fused the architectural features of different countries and tenets of various sects. Sa'gya was in the parish of the Sakya sect, Lhasa and Xigazê were within the influence of the Gelug sect, and Yadong, Bhutan and Sikkim were dominated by the Kagyu sect. Under three sectarian influences, Palkhor Monastery embraced them all, allowing them to make their own distinctions. In particular, the Bodhi Stupa is the most characteristic symbol of the monastery. Also called Ten-Thousand Buddha Stupa, it houses shrines for over 100,000 Buddhist statues on each floor. Its outer shape reveals a tinge of Nepalese architecture. The huge Buddha's eyes painted on the side symbolize the wide dissemination of dharma.

From the stupa, one can see the ruins of the Dzong Castle in the distance. Against the blue sky, the castle towering imposingly on the cliff stands as a silent witness to the war a century before. At dusk, the ancient castle soaked in the blood-red hue of the setting sun reminds people of the swift way the world changes. The whinnying of horses, the clanking of

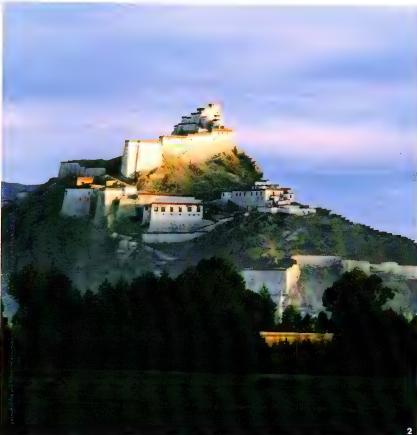


weapons... all that seemed to have happened just yesterday. It was the ruins of the Zongshan Castle, built in 967, that brought fame to Gyangzê.

In 1904, the British troops invaded Gyangzê and fought for eight months against the resisting Tibetan forces. It may have been a different ending if the Tibetan soldiers had had more provisions and ammunitions.

We stood on the remnants of the castle, a cold wind blowing. Palkhor Monastery encompassed by undulating red walls on the mountains rested remote and quiet in twilight. The winding walls and dilapidated glazed tiles on top of the monastery attest to the sadness of history.

An old street about 50 metres north of the Palkhor Monastery's main gate is now paved with cement and packed with shops on both sides.



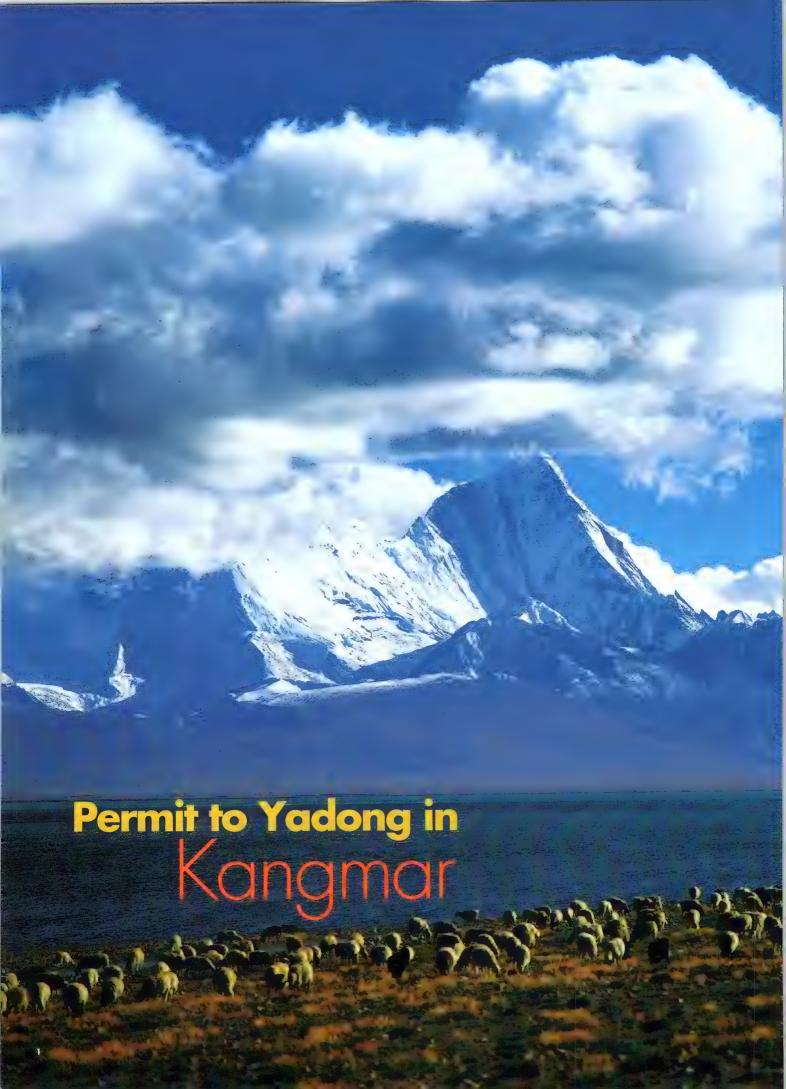
Posters of pop stars are everywhere. Cinemas show Hong Kong movies and Internet café are crowded. The ancient city of Gyangzê is changing.

Kangmar is in the middle of the Gyangzê-Yadong Highway that was completed and put in service this year. Compared with other highways in Tibet, it was virtually an expressway. We reached the border checkpoint at Kangmar in just 1.5 hours. None of us had not applied for a border permit because we mistakenly believed that a passport and China Entry Permit would be sufficient. The fact is, however, that Yadong is a special zone and not open for tourism, and therefore a border permit is required.

#### Agrico Turio - Social Edika kapusa Tangga

is 1904, the British Earl hadio Lempony covered byanggot for as stronger position. For inflighter liber from India to These, Colored Younghoshard led on immedianastic of 600 British makes to invade 6 surgice bear Youlong, Lead though early orders of the Tougshan Lasse, defended hereby. The Gyangge people built employeements on the full, and hought with eliciteshioned commons, good, sweeds, knives, specific and bears and answer for eight mentics. It the earl, the Theorem makes and militia, coming out of provisions and anomalities, compet of the diff. The British though perintinated the defence five and treak over Lasse. Every forced the Polic Lasse or age the Jiesse Convention by which Yudong was opened as a made pon.

- Palkhor Monastery sits quietly in twilight. The winding red walls and the dilapidated glazed tiles on top of the monastery attest to the sadness of history. (by Stephen Or)
- 2. At dusk, the ancient castle soaked in the blood-red hue of the setting sun reminds people of the swift way the world changes. (by Guo Ji)



Though not a big place, it was not easy to apply for a border permit at the Kangmar county government. As it was the long Labour Day holidays, all government offices were closed. We were feeling lost. The proprietress of a Sichuan restaurant told us to go to the border troops for the permit, not the government. We rushed to find the barracks on the outskirts of the county seat and disappointingly were directed to the Public Security. We drove there, another corner of the county seat, where we were further frustrated. They could only issue permits to local people of the county. With that reply, we felt totally down and out.

#### **Desperate Permit Application**

A fellow traveller made a lot of calls, trying to help us out. In the end the Public Security agreed to handle our case as an exception but the nightmare continued for me. All the Chinese mainlanders were issued permits — but I, a Hong Kong resident, was refused.

In the evening, the proprietress did us one more favour. 'I'll write a message to the head of the border checkpoint. He'll let you pass with the message.' With that message, the head of the border checkpoint withheld my SAR passport and let me go through.

#### **Blood-shedding Red River Valley**

Qumigxung Valley, meaning 'flatland with spring water' in Tibetan, is also known as 'Red River Valley'.

Its translucent waters nurture the green grassland, making one wonder where is the link to the word 'red'. The answer lies in the area's resistance to the British in 1904.

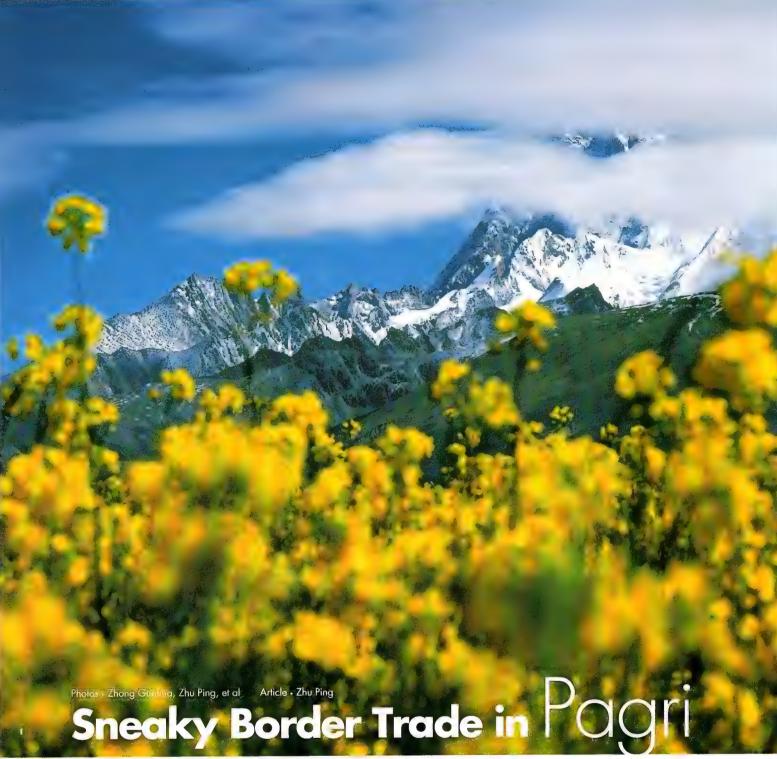
Before heading to Gyangzê, the British army planned to attack the Gawu area. Knowing that the Qumigxung Valley was heavily guarded, Britain proposed negotiation. The British negotiator said. 'To show your sincerity, we request your soldiers extinguish the rope fuses of their muskets.' Even though the British emptied the bullets out of their more advanced guns as their own gesture of sincerity, they were able to fool the Tibetans and quickly reloaded them. While it took time for the Tibetans to relight their fuses, the British needed only to aim and shoot. The Tibetan soldiers fell in the dense fire of machine guns and cannons. The negotiation site became a scene of blood and slaughter. Over 1,400 Tibetan soldiers were killed, with only 380 surviving.

Today only ruins are left in Qumigxung Valley. A monument, two red columns propping up a golden round plate, was erected in the flat valley. Its inscription in Chinese, Tibetan and English records the incident. Leaving Qumigxung Valley, all our car's passengers sat still, pondering history. Although we were alerted to the site of the beautiful Gala Lake by the crunching of the wheels on the lakeside rocks, we suddenly had no mood for sightseeing.

Note: With a guarantee obtained from a local enterprise or through a travel agency in Lhasa or Xigazê, it is easy to get a border permit from the Public Security. Most travel agencies offer such a service for 100 yuan.

- Sprawling green grass and towering snowy mountains surround the Gala Lake. It is hard to link such bright beauty to the dark memory of a bloody battle a century ago. (by Zhona Guohua)
- 2. Autumn is the harvest season for the nomads of Gala Township. (by Zhong Guohua)





Leaving the Dochen Tso and climbing over the Kangla Pass, 4,760 metres above sea level, we arrived at Pagri Town, the highest city in the world. In July, the Pagri Plateau is at its most beautiful. In a wide expanse dominated by snow-capped peaks, rape flowers were in full bloom.

The Pagri Plateau runs alongside the Sikkim border for over 60 km. In that area, there are 18 named passes and numerous nameless passes. Through one pass from Pagri it is only 7 km to the nearest town in Sikkim. Before the re-opening of the Natoi La Pass, the border trade at Yadong was largely handled by the Bhutanese. A trade port since ancient times, Pagri had long enjoyed prosperous trade. In the Qing dynasty (1644—1911) border trade reached its prime and today historic sites remain

that prove the existence of friendly border exchanges. When the trade in Yadong reached its peak, Pagri was one of the most important transit points and post stations for horse caravans. Traders of Han, Tibetan, Indian and Nepalese origins all set up offices in Pagri.

Wangdui, a local elderly man over 60 years old, still remembers the old times. Horse caravans from Yunnan, Kham (or Kangba, Sichuan Province), and Han areas passed by his home, carrying sheep wool, herbs and silk to India and brought back spices, cloth and tea. The tinkling of the horse bells were heard on the cross-border trails between China and Bhutan for many years.

Since the China-India War in 1962 along the border, the border trade between Bhutan and China has been stagnant. In recent years it has enjoyed a



limited revival. At Pagri in the summer, Bhutanese in long pants with short skirts outside can be seen everywhere. A local Tibetan told us that the Bhutanese occupied at least 30 of the beds available in the border trade guesthouse in Pagri every day from April to August. With US dollars they bought a wide variety of made-in-China consumer goods: thermos, plastic shoes, blankets, cloth, TV sets, cameras, mobile phones, VCDs, etc. Some came to sell cordyceps, a valuable Chinese herb. Chinese goods, much cheaper than Indian goods, were popular in Bhutan. Bhutan produced only tobacco, wine and matches and relies on the import of many other daily necessities from China. At the Pagri's border market, I chatted with Ciren (in Mandarin), a Bhutanese who came to sell cordyceps. He earns over 10,000 yuan



by selling this valuable herb and his family of ten count on his herb business. So far, there is no highway between Bhutan and China, and therefore Ciren has to first take a bus to Dare Pasture, about 10 km from the border on the Pagri side, and then walk for a day to get home.

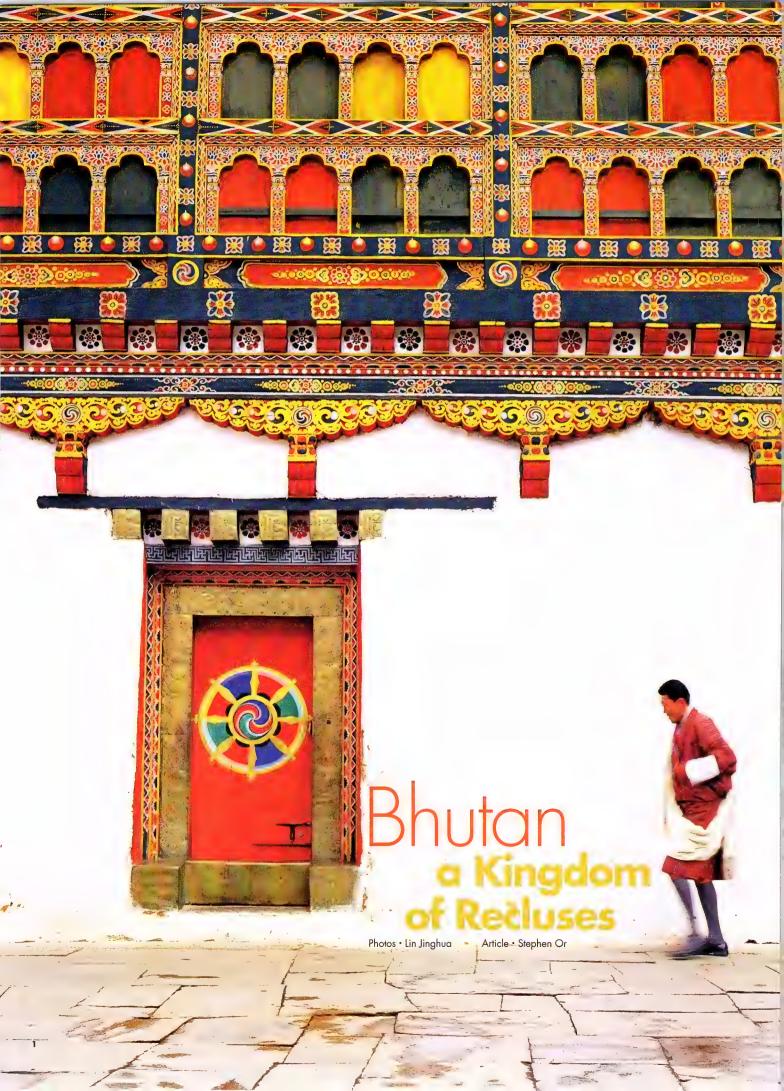
Bhutanese horse caravans, mostly from Haba County of Bhutan, did business in Pagri. Each time they bought blankets, plastic shoes, thermoses, and small household electrical appliances worth over 100,000 yuan. They would then sell the goods in Bhutan, earning around 30,000 yuan. While the border police on the Chinese side were not so strict, the Indian soldiers on the Bhutan side were not so accommodating and refused them entry into China. If they were caught, their goods would be confiscated. That's why they usually crossed the border at night and stayed in the pasture. At dawn they would herd the caravan to Haba, where they could take a bus to Thimbu, capital of Bhutan. The traders hope that the relations between China and Bhutan would soon become normalized since being sneaky is too risky. The value of such 'small business' should not be underestimated. A Yadong government official said that the transactions of a single border trade market in Pagri totalled over 20 million yuan.

Though Pagri is only 7 km away from the nearest town in Bhutan, tourists cannot enter Bhutan from Tibet. China and Bhutan do not have normal bilateral relations and Bhutan has no embassy in China. Tourists have to apply for a visa through the Indian embassy. With a visa, tourists can only enter the country by air. That explains why the Bhutanese come into China to do business and why the Chinese rarely cross to the Bhutan side.

Translated by Zhang Boli

1. In July, the Pagri Plateau is at its most beautiful. In a wide expanse dominated by snow-capped peaks, rape flowers were in full bloom. (by Zhu Ping)

2. Many ancestors of the Tibetans in Pagri were heroes who fought the British Army. (by Zhong Guohua)



As a natural barrier, the Himalayas keep Bhutan in its isolated state. This small country between China and India seems to be a hermit, withdrawn from the world. One can say Bhutan is one of the most backward and remote countries on Earth, for it always ranks among the few states with the lowest incomes: meanwhile Bhutan is one of the most pleasant nations on the globe, for it took fifth place in terms of the world 'happiness index' in 2006, even higher than the U.S. A. and Hong Kong. Although it borders China, the two countries have no diplomatic relations. It is hard to predict whether the railway will stretch into Bhutan when it extends to Yadong, for so far, there is not even a single metre of railroad anywhere in this country.

#### No Place for Vehicles

Once a visitor who had been to Bhutan told me. Bhutan is a country with one foot remaining in the Middle Ages and the other stepping into the 21st century.' In Bhutan, you will not find any modern large factories

To preserve its traditional culture and customs. Bhutan had strictly carried on close-door diplomatic policies. It did not open itself to the outside world until 1974, and even that has been limited. While most countries of the world have vigorously developed their tourist industries to attract foreign capital. Bhutan has controlled the number of foreign visitors at less than 5,000 per year.

The first highway in Bhutan, which connects its capital Thimphu to Phuentsholing [also spelt as Phuntsholing on most maps] on the frontier of India, only appeared in 1962. Before that, vehicles would have had nowhere to go in Bhutan. The Bhutanese are in fact used to either travelling on foot or riding horses along mountain paths. There are no more than four petrol filling stations in their capital Thimphu, the largest city in Bhutan. With a population of barely 40,000, the capital is smaller than some rural towns in China. The capital's narrow streets simply have double lines down the centre, and have more homeless dogs than cars on them. The Bhutanese government tried to introduce some traffic lights into the capital years ago but this suggestion was voted down because the residents feared the ugly lights would harm the appearance of their city.

#### Facing the External Impact

Are the lofty Himalayas and severe closed-door policies enough to limit the effects of external factors? Present-day Bhutan is facing the impact of alobalization. The recent intrusion of satellite TV and the Internet has broken down Bhutan's view of the world. Today, the 40 international TV channels available have become a necessary part of entertainment to the Bhutanese. More and more

young people are curious about the outside world, and hankering to take a trip out of their country to know more

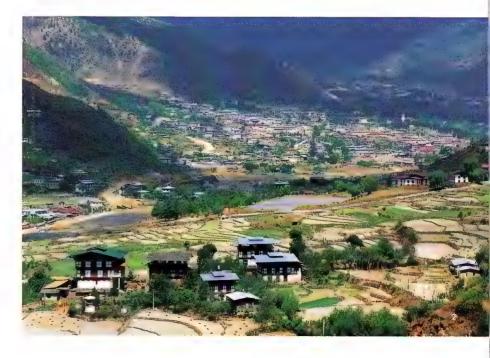
Of the few motorcars in the capital, most are Toyota jeeps; one might also see the occasional name-brand roadsters involved in a race. Bars discotheques and snooker games have become major entertainment choices of the young, and even some lamas from temples may often be seen in the crowded Internet cafés. A world renowned recreation hotel group, Aman Resorts, a Singapore chain hotel. Como Resorts, and the largest Indian hotel, Tai, have recently entered Bhutan, skilfully breaking the closeddoor state of the country. Therefore, no one can bet that the train will never reach Bhutan, since time marches on all over our Earth

#### More Tibetan than Tibet

In Sanskrit, Bhutan means the 'frontier of Tibet'. This small country at the southern foot of the Himalayas has been closely linked to Tibet since ancient times. It shares the same origins as Tibet in terms of religious faith and culture, and its language used in daily life are identical with those in Tibet. Even its calendar was developed on the basis of the Tibetan one. Nowadays, Lhasa is still an important holy place in the minds of Bhutanese, and every Bhutanese will make a pilgrimage once in their lives to Lhasa. Ninetvsix per cent of the citizens here believe in Tibetan Buddhism, and Drukpa Kagyu (White Sect) is respected as the national faith. Some tourists have said that this place is more Tibetan than Tibet.

In Bhutan, lofty temples and imposing stupas can be seen everywhere, and coloured flags with inscriptions from Buddhist scriptures are found all over

- 1. The Bhutan Kingdom is committed to maintaining its traditional culture, and therefore men in their national costumes are often seen alongside traditional architecture on the streets
- 2. In Thimphu, the capital, both the population and vehicle traffic is are



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1. On 9 March every year, a deitydancing ceremony is held in a lama temple in Punakha Dzong, a former capital of Bhutan.

- 2. The Dzong combine politics and religion in Bhutan by being both residences for manks and office sites of the local governments.
- 3. The Taktsang Monastery, purportedly blessed by Master Padmasambhava, has been appraised as the most sacred spot in the Himalayas.

mountains. No matter whether in temples or on the streets and lanes, one can always see several lamas in red robes strolling along with others. Around the age of five or six years, children in Bhutan are sent to learn at a Buddhist temple, with prominent elderly monks as teachers. In Paro Dzong, there is a temple known as the Kyichu Lakhang Monastery, which is said to have been one of four devils-controlling temples built at the times of Songtsen Gampo. The monastery was originally built in 659 and, has not only been well preserved but also been a site of many pilgrimages since then. Inside the major hall a statue of Songtsen Gampo, is enshrined, beside that of the Buddha. The stone area outside the temple has

become as shiny as a mirror due to 1,300 years of believers kneeling on it.

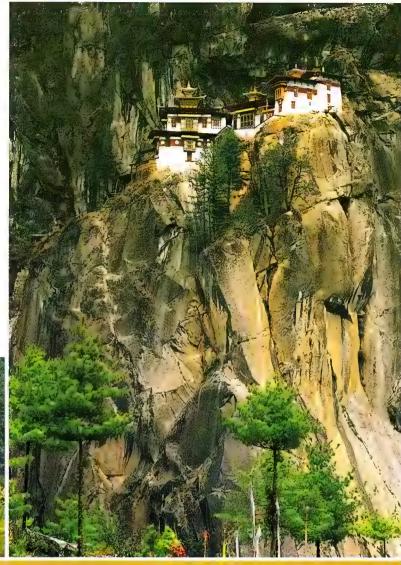
During important religious festivals every year, the same exorcist dances are performed in the temples in Bhutan as in the monasteries in Tibet. Occasionally the lamas, wearing their light yellow silk skirts, embroidered yak-leather boots and a variety of 'savage' masks, dance to the accompaniment of traditional instruments. According to the locals, these masks are the products of the Bon sect, a primitive religion in Tibet; some are intended to express their devotion to Nature, some to drive off monsters, and some to pray for a harvest the next year.

#### **Dzong Combines Politics and Religion**

Travelling in Tibet, one can easily find castle relics in the centre of many heavily populated cities, towns and counties. Many used to be local Tibetan government administrative institutions that were largely ruined during the cultural revolution period (1966—1976). Among them, the best preserved is the Zongshan Castle in Gyangzê (apparently maintained after that catastrophe). The combining of politics and religion in such structures is an interesting aspect of Bhutan that should not be missed.

The Dzong is an administrative unit in Bhutan. Wherever 'Dzong' is marked on a map, there is such a structure. The Dzong construction comes from Tibet but it differs from a temple by being both a residence for monks and an office site for local government. In accordance with a governmental stipulation, no Dzong is open to tourists when it houses monks. Defence is another function of the Dzong, where in wartime, all the townspeople can take refuge.





#### Setting to Blivia

The Bhutanese government stipulates that a tourist has to join and pay government stipulated fees for a tour before he is granted a visa and permission into Bhutan. No individual tours are allowed. Tourists can set their own agenda and timing for the tour. For a four-person tour, each person pays US\$200 a day, which includes the costs of meeting and seeing off at the Paro Airport, lodging throughout the tour, an English-speaking guide, and a variety of admissions and taxes; fees excluded are visa fees (US\$20) and departure taxes (US\$20). For tours of less than four people, extra fees apply daily: US\$40 for a single person, US\$30 for two people, and US\$20 for three people.

#### Visas

Bhutan has no diplomatic relations with China, so tourists have to obtain their visas through a Bhutan tour operator with an affiliated overseas agent authorized by the Bhutanese government. The cost is US\$20. Visa spplication forms can be advantaged at the following sites:

Bhutan Himalaya Tours & Travel e-mail: tshomo@druknet.bt Bhutan Kaze Tours & Treks e-mail: wings@druknet.bt

#### Transportation

The Paro International Airport, 55 km away from Thimphu, is the only airport into and out of this country, and DrukAir is Bhutan's notional airline with flights to New Delhi, Calcutta, Dacca, Rangoon, Kathmandu and Bangkok. In addition, tourists can travel in and out of Bhutan by way of Phentsholing [spelt as

Phuntsholing on most maps ] in southern Bhutan, which neighbours Jaigaon, a frontier town in India. From Jaigaon, travellers can find their way to Bagdogra for a flight, or Siliguri (about 169 km away) for a train, to other places in India.

#### **Tourist Season**

The temperatures vary greatly from early morning to evening from January to May and August to December. Thick clothing may be necessary, especially when passing through some valleys and mountain passes where the temperature changes abruptly.

#### **Festivals**

There is a grand Buddhist festival in early April and September every year, during which many Buddhist ceremonies and activities are performed.

#### Currencies

The Indian rupee is widely accepted in Bhutan. Conversion rates are: 1 Ngultrum : 1 Indian rupee; 44.7 Ngultrum : 1 US dollar.

#### Travel Agencies for Bhutan Tours

Hong Kong: Global Union Transportation Limited

Tel: (852) 2868 3231 Fax: (852) 2537 2605



Yadong has been brought into the spotlight again along with the opening of the QTR last year. A series of historical changes have taken place — the reopening of the Natoi La border trade market last year, the construction of a blacktopped highway from Gyangzê to Yadong, and the promise of an extension to the QTR. These events are driving the formerly prosperous Yadong up onto central stage once more.

#### A Dagger Between Sikkim and Bhutan

Although Yadong is often noted as resembling a dagger thrusting between Sikkim and Bhutan, I think a key is a more appropriate term — a key to the door of trade into the Southern Asia. Extruding from southern Tibet, Yadong is a frontier point to the west of Bhutan and the north and east (Sikkim) of India, as well as a trade port and an important military location. In Tibetan, Yadong means a 'deep valley of gushing flows'. Descending from the 4,360metre high meadows in the Pagri mountains, it is a 2,000 metre drop down to the Lower Sima Town 50 km away, where the county seat of Yadong is situated. Due to these contrasting

altitudes, two distinct climates occur here. North of Pagri is a typical plateau climate, which is dry and cold, with wild deserts, snowcapped mountains and meadows seen everywhere; south of Pagri is an obvious subtropical climate, which is damp and rainy, and characterized by dense jungle. The Himalayas block the damp monsoons from the Indian Ocean, forming a miniature Yadong climate that fluctuates widely.

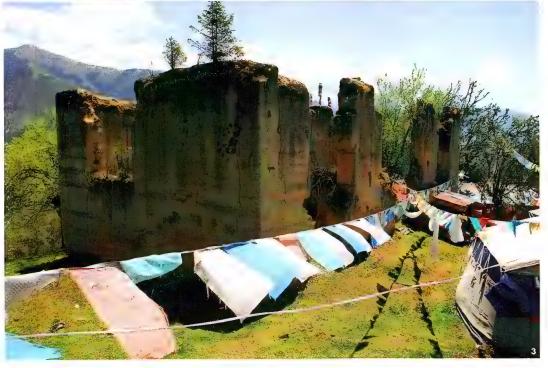
From its opening to the outside world to the present, Yadong has always been a place of significant events. Over 1,000 years ago, it was through here that Xuanzang, a prominent monk of the Tang dynasty, went to India looking for the orthodox sutras. At the beginning of last century, British army officer Francis Younghusband led his Indian expedition troops through this area to invade Tibet. Burning, looting and slaughtering all the way from Kala to Gyangzê, they seized Lhasa and compelled the local Tibetan government to sign the 'Lhasa Convention', forcibly turning Yadong into a trade port. Ever since then, Yadong has been closely connected with Tibet's modern history.

#### An Escape Route to India

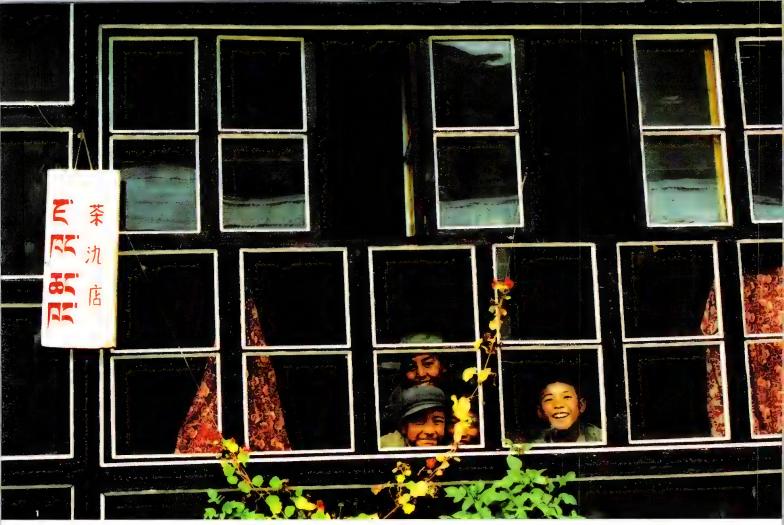
Yadong used to be a route for Dalai Lama XIII, who travelled to Darjeeling, India in 1909 and returned to Lhasa in 1912. In the early 1950s when the PLA was garrisoned in Tibet, Dalai Lama XIV escaped from Lhasa, hiding in the Eastern Kagyu Monastery deep in the mountains at Yadong for as long as six months. During the course of the peaceful liberation of Tibet, Yadong played a significant part as well. Zhang Jingwu, a PLA general, made a special trip to negotiate with

Dalai Lama XIV in Yadong, inviting and escorting him back to Lhasa. In 1959, the Dalai Lama crossed the frontier from Yadong and began his decades of life in exile abroad, and in response, the door to Yadong was tightly closed. Following the 1962 conflict that broke out along the border between China and India, the area has had tranquillity for nearly half a century. Last year, as the QTR opened, Natoi La was reopened, and the railway extension became a hot topic, Yadong once again became the focus of attention.





- 1. The Kagyu Monastery, on the northern side of the Nathula Mountain, faces Sikkim, Bhutan and India to the east, west and south respectively. It is a Kagyu shrine of unique styles. (by Zhu Ping)
- 2. Tibetan children herding the stock. (by Zhu Ping)
- 3. The room in Eastern Kagyu Monastery, where Dalai used to live, now lies in ruins. (by Keke)



- There has been a boom in Tibetan house construction in Yadong after the Renginggang border trade market was opened. (by Zhu Ping)
- 2. The Renginggang border trade market just opened on 1 July last year. (by Zhu Ping)
- 3. In Yadong, most houses are made of wood, though some have added corrugated iron roofs. (by Yang Yankana)
- 4. Vendors Yadong play cards to kill time when the border market is closed. (by Keke)

#### From Plateau to Subtropical Jungle

Not long beyond Pagri Town, our vehicle began its abrupt descent, reaching Lower Sima Town amid a vast primitive forest in no time. The town's residents have a distinct style that differed significantly from Pagri. While Pagri has many stone houses, Lower Sima Town used its surrounding forest to construct wood houses. The whole town was impressively simple and tranquil. Like many other welldesigned small border towns, this one also has a street extending north to south, with one end leading to Gangtok, capital of Sikkim, and the other to Darjeeling in India and Kathmandu in Nepal. Along the street, few buildings over three storeys tall exist, except for the Post Office and the County Hostel where we were stayed. Walking down the street, it was obvious that we were strangers, continually attracting attention from passersby, but we were unsure if this was because it was not a frontier trade day or that few people actually strolled outdoors.

At night, the sounds of flowing water and sighing pines far away in a valley that we heard made it feel especially tranquil. If the railway construction goes ahead, this border port of Yadong, cocooned for nearly half a century, may not remain the quiet place it once was.

#### A Gateway to Tibet and Southern Asia

According to records, merchants from Chinese

inland began to trade with Middle, Western and Southern Asia as early as over 2,000 years ago, and an enormous amount of silk products made in China were transported westwards through Natoi La in Yadong. Ever since, it had also been through this pass that the silk and tea products were continually distributed abroad.

The British forced Natoi La open with their guns, making it the largest trade port between China and India. In the early 20th century, its maximum trade value was as high as one hundred million 'silver dollars', about eighttenths of the total trade value along the SinoIndia frontier at that time. Half a century ago, merchants from India, Southeast Asia, and even Hong Kong travelled through this pass to deliver their goods all over Tibet. The Dalai Lama XIV's jalopy, which can be seen in Norbulingka, is said to have been dismantled in India first, and then reassembled after it was carried through Natoi La to Lhasa.

In those days, like most young men from Yadong, Old Wangdui, who is nearing 70 years of age, was engaged in horse caravans.

But early in the 1960s, the border trade pass was closed, and many shops there were shut down, leaving only one supply and marketing cooperation exclusively selling goods. To support his family, Wangdui had to return to farming. Over the 40 long years of forbidden border trade along the SinoIndia frontier, many Indian and Sikkim merchants stealthily

slipped into Pagri Town to trade. From March to June each year, Bhutan's border residents would bring the medicines such as caterpillar fungus and gastrodia tuber they recently picked up, making Pagri Town into the largest black market near this border. Wanadui knew well he was not the farming type, so he moved his family to Pagri, and resumed his former trade selling medicines and household supplies. Only a few years ago did the whole family move back to Yadona to operate a general store. Now the border trade has reopened in Yadona, the old man has been clamouring to go India and see his old friends.

'In my childhood, I often saw Indian merchants with red beards and blue eves wrapped in their turbans on the street,' said Kelsang, the old man's eldest daughter, In her 50s now, she had childhood memories of those bearded merchants bringing her favourite cashmere scarves and Indian perfumes.

Now retired from the county seat, Kelsang also runs a general store in Lower Sima Town, carrying on, so to speak, her father's career. Despite its small size, her store looks like an international firm that provides all types of goods, including household supplies from the Chinese inland, top quality ghee from Samsang district, perfumes from Nepal, and shawls from India. On a wall near the counter, costumes bought wholesale from Chenadu, the capital of Sichuan Province, were hung.

'Many things are delivered from the inland, so our prices are somewhat higher. A bottle of mineral water is priced at merely one yuan at an inland supermarket, but here we may charge two yuan or so,' Kelsang explained, 'The prices are higher, indeed, but still the border residents from Bhutan and India often come shopping, for Chinese products are better and cheaper anyhow. When the railway is open, business will presumably become easier.' Kelsang is pinning her hopes on the future.

## Chengdu People Share the Prosperity

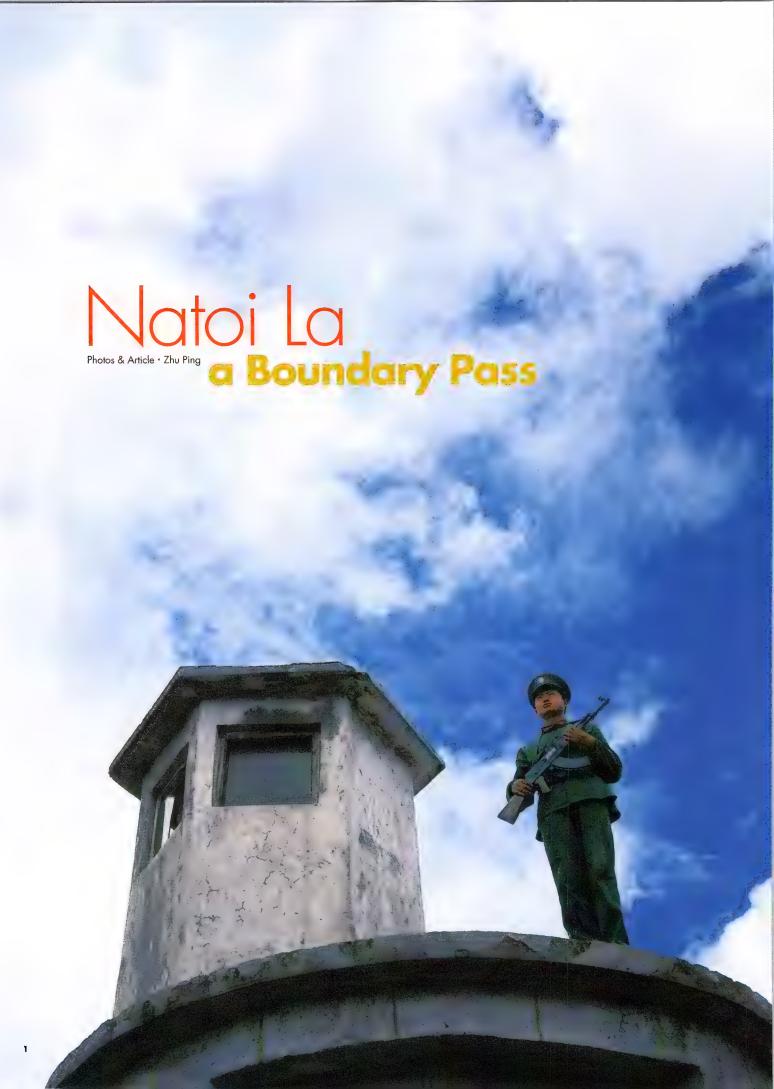
Not only native Yadong people but also merchants from all over China have been expecting a good future for Yadong. Xiao Wang, who comes from Chengdu, opened a restaurant in Yadong immediately after the port was opened last year. He reckoned that people coming here for business would have to feed themselves anyhow, and if tourists were included, his plan would certainly work. One year has passed and Chinese merchants and tourists have increased tremendously but the purported surge in those from India is yet to be seen. Many Indians conduct their business in the Renginggang border market situated a dozen kilometres from Natoi La and seldom travel







as far as Lower Sima Town. The Renginggang market is open Monday to Thursday from June to October all year. Every day the market is open, Xiao Wang's restaurant would be crowded with merchants from many places but on weekends, the prosperity disappeared, and Xiao Wang was so idle he had time to play cards with the locals. He has confidence in the future of Yadong if, as suggested, the highway and railway open a few vears later.



Neighbouring Sikkim, the Natoi La (meaning a place where the wind and snow are heaviest in Tibetan) Pass is located in Yadong County, Xigazê District, Tibet. At an altitude of 4,500 metres, it is the highest highway trade passage in the world, and a future exit abroad of the Himalayan Railway: 54 km to Gangtok, the capital of Sikkim; 52 km to Yadong in Tibet, and 429 km to Lhasa. This pass is the shortest land route for Sino-Indian trade.

One section of the route to Natoi La involves wandering for more than one hour through the mountains. Because of the warm air from the Indian Ocean, the Natoi La is wrapped by clouds and fog throughout the year. We had good luck, however, and as the sun appeared and the heavy fog faded. we saw both the Chinese and Sikkim frontier sentry stands facing each other on both sides of the pass. Merely 20 metres apart, this lookout post is the nearest to that of a neighbouring country in all the mountain passes in China. Some wire netting stretched along the ridge divided the pass into halves, the northern half in China, and the south, Sikkim. According to the Chinese soldiers, those on the other side, except the officers, were all paid Gurkhas from neighbouring countries. Growing up in the mountains, they were tough and especially capable of handling harsh conditions.

# The World's Highest Postal Booth

Through the pass there is a traditional international post service route, where some mail between China and India are delivered. The author was lucky to witness the exchange of mail between both sides. At the appointed time, a Chinese postman in his green postal uniform carried a green postal bag on his

back, appearing on time at the frontier line close to the international postal route. At the sight of the Chinese postman, the troops on the other side became alert immediately. And then, a postman from the other side also carried a green postal bag, hastened towards the frontier line. Shaking hands, both postmen went into the International Postal Booth in Chinese territory.

Previously, mail deliveries between the two countries were made outdoors no matter in wind, rain or snow. Now, this 'International Postal Booth', built near the frontier, has unexpectedly set a record for being the highest altitude postal booth in the world. Inside the booth, there are tables, chairs, teas, candies, cigarettes as well as some magazines in a foreign language.

Once inside the International Postal Booth, the postmen exchanged their mail immediately. The Chinese postman handed over his mail first; having checked the mail and assured all things were in order, the Indian postman carefully signed his name on a delivery list. Then it was the same process for the Indian postman, who left immediately afterwards, retracing his steps back to his country by the same route. Only then did the Indian troops retreat.

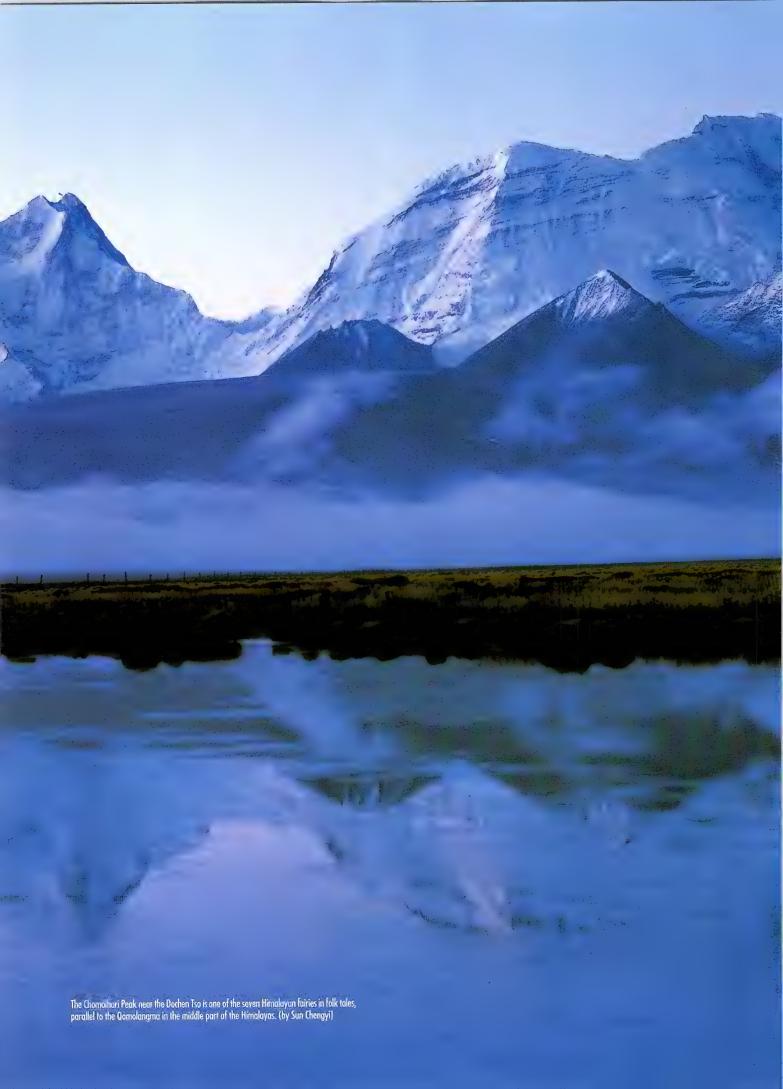
Translated by Huang Deyuan

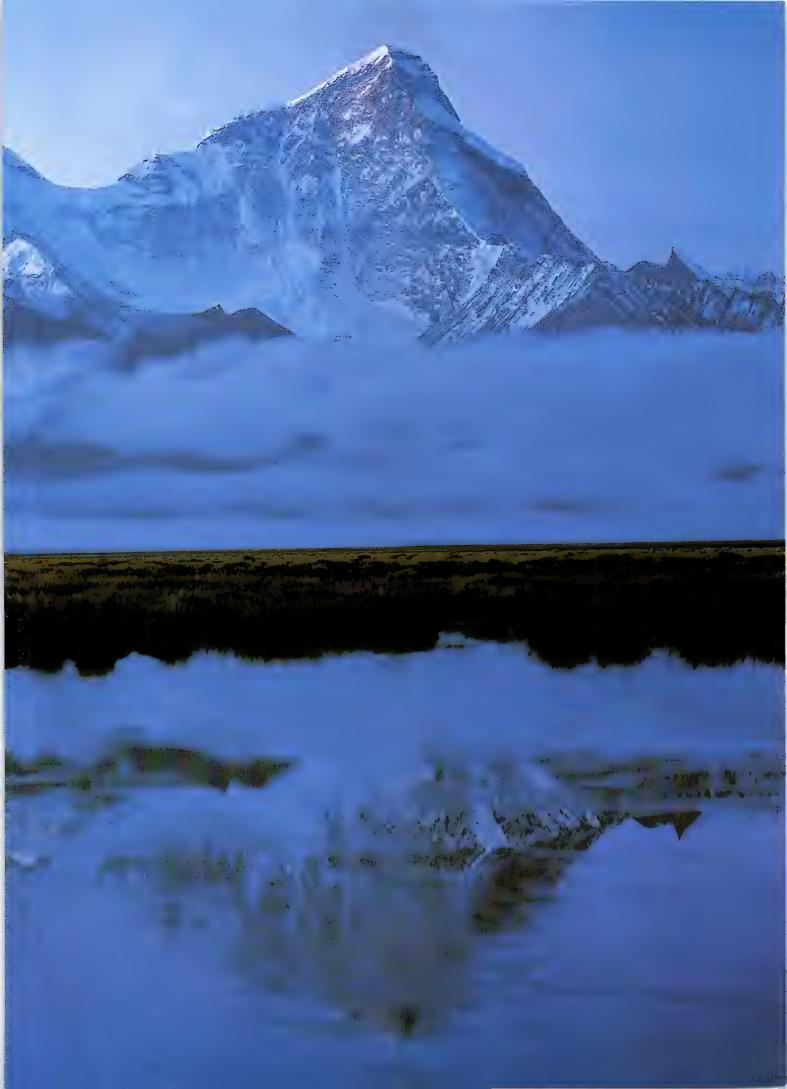
- Chinese troops are garrisoned at the Natoi La frontier all year round.
- 2. The highest altitude postal booth in the world.
- 3. Indian frontier troops stood at the monument commemorating the inspection of Natoi La by India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.
- 4. The postmen from China and India signed a mail delivery list.

Note: For a trip to the Natoi La, one must first go to the Yadong County Government to get a certification letter and then to the Natoi La frontier-garrisoned sixth regiment for a single pass.











 Standing at the India-Sikkim border checkpoint, one can gaze at Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world.

2. The Rangpo checkpoint at the India border is where entry into Sikkim is decided.

Sitting on the south slope of the Himalayas, the Indian state of Sikkim faces Tibet to its north and Bhutan and Nepal to the east and west respectively. Kanchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world, stands on the Sikkim-Nepal border close to China. With such a crossroad, Sikkim has long been deemed the fastest passage from the Ganges Plain to Tibet and even inland China. The planned Himalayas Railway will exit China from Yadong, Tibet to make its way to Gangtok, capital of Sikkim. It will go further along the existing Darjeeling Himalayas Railway to Siliguri and even Calcutta.

## Mood-dependent Visa

The Indian border is 10 km from Siliguri. We paid the driver USD two dollars each to go directly to the long-distance coach station in Siliguri. Coaches to Gangtok or Darjeeling were available. There was a Sikkim visa office up at the station where foreign visitors could apply, with two photos, for a free visa. Sometimes the time needed to obtain the visa depended on the official's mood. Sometimes it is ready in only one hour. The applicants sat in the office, waiting for the roll-call. We waited for three hours. Our visa specified that

we could visit Ganatok only.

Sikkim is over 2,000 metres above sea level. Leaving Siliguri, the coach went up and down the mountains and deep valleys, bringing on a feeling of travel in Switzerland. Halfway, visitors had to get off at Rangpo checkpoint and produced their visas. It was a critical moment. In theory, the visa granted was the right of entry. In reality, the Rangpo checkpoint decided the entry. Luckily, we were granted our seven days sojourn in Sikkim. After the checkpoint, the coach rumbled along for another five hours before arriving in Gangtok.

In August the temperature of Calcutta reaches a scorching 37°C. In Gangtok, it was just 20°C, cool and nice, though we needed a light jacket at night. Gangtok is similar to Rennies's Mill of Hong Kong in the old days. Low buildings were strewn on the slopes. White clouds girdled the ridges. It is a reclusive place.

## Restricted to Gangtok

So far, due to political reasons, Sikkim has only opened its capital Gangtok for tourism. The application to get to other parts of the country is tedious.

There is no bus service in Gangtok, which means that the backpackers have difficulty getting around. We rented a 4WD from the travel agency and were able to go around all Gangtok's scenic spots. We made an appointment with the 4WD to pick us up at 3 a.m. to see the 8,586 metre-high Kanchenjunga at sunrise. We reached the Tiger Viewing Deck in just over one hour, awaiting the spectacle. Unfortunately, the day turned out gloomy and we left the mountain disappointed. On the way back we visited the 200year old Enchey Monastery, where the Dalai Lama had paused for a few days on his way to exile to India. The monastery kept the handprint of His Holiness. A few senile lamas there were also from Tibet but, due to communication problems, we couldn't learn anything about that chapter of history from them.

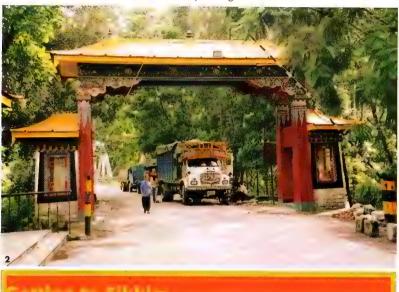
In the afternoon we visited Tibet Nationality Institute, which has three centuries of precious documents and historical relics, including books, devices for Buddhist rituals, thangkas and high lamas' apparel. I particularly liked the thangkas; these are painted or embroidered Buddhist banners that show masterful skills and rich colours. We got to know a few Tibetans who fled Tibet decades before. They could speak Putonghua and told us about those unbearable days.

The trip to Sikkim is perhaps a once in a lifetime experience. I stayed in its small capital city for a few extra days, going to the market in the early morning and having breakfast with the locals. A British-style milk tea with a strong sheep odour, a Tibetan baked bread and an egg cost only USD 50 cents. There were dry goods, such as daily utensils and foods, and 'wet' goods that included fruit, vegetables and meat, in the market. Made-in-China products at bargain prices dominated the trade. The honey was of superb quality, fresh and sweet. It was a pity that I could not take it home. The local people wore the colourful national dress. When we pointed the camera at them, they smiled from ear to ear. Modernity has yet to take its toll on the country.

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: 540,000 (1997 data) Area: 7,096 sq km
  Tibeton Buddhism, Hinduism
   : English, Bhutia and Nepali are popular
: India Rupee
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I loved Sikkim. Life there was peaceful and laidback. A lot of people can speak English. The Sikkimese was not keen to get some small money from tourists. They were polite to outsiders; however, when asked about India's takeover of Sikkim years ago, they became silent.

Translated by Zhang Boli



# ionhous to Sikklin

Visa: All passport holders must first apply for a visa to India, then apply for a visa to Sikkim at the Sikkim visa office in New Dehli or Calcutta. If your application is rejected, you can re-apply in Siliquri at the visa office in the coach station. The Sikkim visa, which takes about two hours to obtain, is free but requires two photos.

Special note: Chinese, Pakistani and Nepalese citizens shall be permitted to visit Sikkim by the permission of Ministry of Home Affairs of India. For Hong Kong BNO holders, it is relatively easy to obtain a visa. It is not advisable to mark professions such as journalist or teacher on the application form.

#### Transportation

It takes about one hour to fly from Calcutta to Bagdagra. From Bagdagra Airport, or Darjeeling/Siliguri Coach Station ill is about 110 to 125 km o Gangtok.

The trip from Calcutta to Siliguri by train takes 10 hours. You can take a taxi from the train station to the coach station. On a shoestring to Sikkim and Darjeeling, you can take a coach first from Siliguri to Sikkim before heading for Darjeeling. Then take the Himalayas jungle train in Darjeeling down the mountain to the terminal in Siliguri.

#### Lodging

July and August are low travel season months. The high season is in December. It is advisable to stay in the hotels near the coach

Hotel Tibet: Double room at USD 20; Tibetan architecture; Tibetan meals served.

Ter 03-592-22523

Add: Paljor Stadium Rd., Gangtok 73701 Website: www.sikkiminfo.net/hoteltibet

#### Tips

- 1. The monsoon season is in July and August.
- 2. Sikkim has only a few banks, which affer low exchange rates. It is advisable to exchange sufficient Indian Rupees for your trip.

#### Useful websites

Official India tourism site: www.tourismindia.com

For information about Sikkim (hotels, travel agencies and scenic spots): www.indiamark.com/sikkim



We went to Darjeeling to seek out the renowned Himalayan Toy Train, a narrow gage railway built by the British. If the south Asian extension of the QTR is built, it will connect to Darjeeling. Wouldn't it be a wondrous sight if the old and new Himalayan railways converged here?

# Himaioyan Tay Trafii

When the Darjeeling railway opened in 1881, it was to transport timber from the Himalayans. More than a century later, this railway has been listed as a World Cultural Heritage site.

This narrow gage railway between Siliguri and Darjeeling, is similar to Yunnan's railway to Vietnam. They are both products of western colonialism, both started out being run by foreigners, they traverse numerous cultures, and were both difficult to construct. But the big difference between the two is that Darjeeling's Himalayan Railway, even though it is World Heritage-listed, is still in operation, but China's Yunnan-Vietnam railway stopped running a long time ago, even the locomotive is now housed in a museum.

The mini-train that traverses the 80-km route is petite in size, thus it is lovingly called the 'Toy Train'. The tourist train is pulled by steam locomotive — the railway became a World Cultural Heritage site in 1999. While the train (for mail) from Siliguri uses a

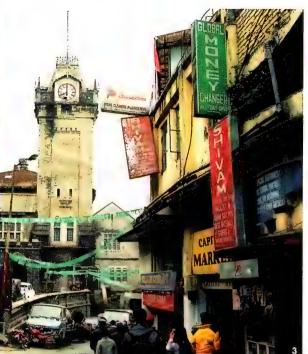
diesel engine, the Toy Train has only one locomotive and two carriages. When it goes uphill the locomotive pushes from behind, when it stops, the driver must run to the back of the train to brake. At every stop, water and coal are added to the steam engine.

The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (DHR) traverses an amazing range of heights, from Siliguri (an historical city on the Indian plains) at just 100 metres above sea level, all the way up to Darjeeling — synonymous with tea (about 2,200 metres in altitude). Travellers can experience three different topologies and climates, journey through some of the most magnificent forests in northern India, and maybe even catch a glimpse of the Himalayas from the railcar.

Imagine it — sitting in state of the art carriages of the extended QTR, making your way from Lhasa across the Himalayas, to meet with 18th century steam trains here, sipping Darjeeling tea, taking in the sights along the way, marvelling at a breathtaking Himalayan sunrise. What a thrill it would be...

There are many British villas on Darjeeling hill, now converted into hotels. Inside it is all typical continental decor, family photos of past owners hang on the walls; even the English-style fireplaces in the living room, dining room and bedrooms have been





the other children looked indistinguishable to me. In my view, the Tibetans, Sikkimese and Bhutanese look similar in bodily and facial features.

A Global Village in the Hills

nostalgic moments.

Walking up to the mountain from Darjeeling feels like crossing different national borders. This small township is at least the most culturally vibrant area in West Bengal, if not the whole of India. I'm rubbing shoulders with people who could be Gurkhas, Lepchas, Yakhas, Devis, Tibetans, Sikkimese, Bhutanese or Nepalese. Even the locals can't tell the different ethnicities apart. In front of a church, we met a group of local children here for mass; one child in a checkered suit looked clearly like a Eurasian of English-Indian parentage. The boy behind him had a darker complexion and more Indian features. While

retained. But the biggest surprise were the British

postal boxes on the streets of Darjeeling. The ones in

Hong Kong were taken away when the city was

handed back to the Chinese mainland, so it was a

nice surprise to see them here, making for some

Santaria (1996) il di abrili etti alleggia il di Bank that Major stress in column at Main assertance has been a िता किस स्थारण स्टब्स्ड स्ट है, राज्यकार है , राहकार कुना दिला एक करते Ministrigingrage in lage the England to Dealer Hage - Inch hour Dage eller the community and a transfer on the case than as a hill to re-។ នៃ អាជីននៅ នាក់។ ស្រាម គេការ ស្នក។ 🔠 📑 👯 😘 क करना असूक दान कर नामांक मां नांकित माराह्य । मिका स्टोलपुर असमोदाक को सक्तादुर्भी on only bend the ago at November's on at minutely a

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## Bevy of Beauties

The best thing about this ethnic melting pot is the abundance of beauties in Darjeeling, the ultimate poster girl has to be Vivien Leigh - of fame of the movie Gone with the Wind, who was born in a wellto-do British family in Darjeeling and sent to a London convent to study when she was six. This place has to be one of India's biggest sources of beauties of mixed race. Stand 10 minutes in front of a local women's university; out of 10 girls who walk past, you'll see eight Indian girls of absolutely ravishing beauty.



- 1. At Siliguri station, the 'Himalayan eagle' steam train ready to leave for Darjeeling. (by Keke)
- 2. Darjeeling's English postal boxes the stuff of collective nostalgia. (by
- 3. The abundance of colonial architecture in Darjeeling makes it seem more like some quaint European town. (by Keke)
- 4. Darjeeling railway built near residences, is an integral part of the locals' lives. (by Jian Peifa)



According to plan we were to return to Xigaxe eifier hiking around Yadong, then travel to Mepal from Zham along the Chinest lepal highway, but neni - yennucji mujer evitijeger ci clicine ejuor cini we got some smart advice from experienced Tibet explorer Xigo Ex go from Yadons to Gamba along the border, then from Tingkye to old Tingri at the foot of the Clamblangma Peak. There are several 8, 000-metre plus mountains along the way, and no refurn journey is necessary.

Chairefing a car from Yadong to Comolangma vid Gamba was no easy feat. Most drivers were scared off when they heard of the route we chose, because the roads are not maintained, plus it is

The road to Gamba was not as bad as we imagined, because not many trucks use it and because it is used by the military, the road conclitions are good. We saw stunning sights along the way as the car wound its way up the valley, from the dense forests of Yadong to the highchitiede meadows of Gamba. This had always been prime ocalure for l'ibetan herclers. There is an old saying in Tiber's butter, Pali's yak, Gamba's sheep with the cheep referred to one from here.

The first thing you see when you enter the township of Gambai is Kangahanjunga. The 8,586bith abliew ent to canon nicinuom lici-ertem



highest. This peak marks the border between China, Sikkim and I lepal; it is also the sacred mountain for the people of Sikkim, perennially covered by snow and veiled in mist. Legend has it that the Kangchenjunga god lives on the summit. The god has a fiery temper — shown by his sonstantly flushed face. He wears a crown made from five skulls and rides a handsome snow lion. Even before we entered Gamba, we were awed by the majestic Kangchenjunga.

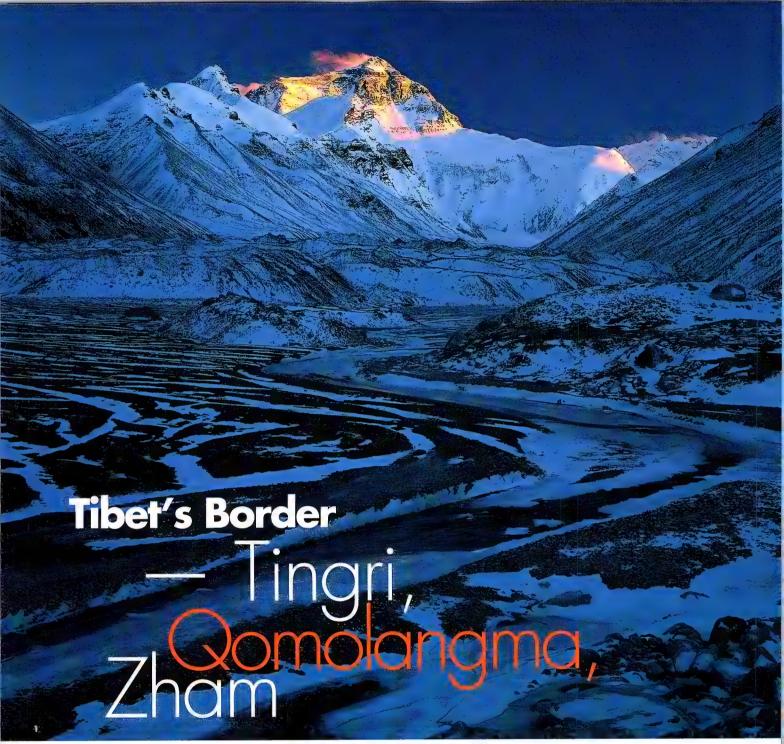
At the town's edge is a hill on which the ruins of an ancient castle stand. That's where the former Gamba government once resided. On a treacherous near-vertical slope stands what used to be the clay-brick castle — over 600 years later, the crumbling remains still evoke grandeur of times past.

Samba may be a big name in the history

stakes, but its isolated and remote location has meant it is not well known — a recluse, even. The entire town of Gamba is small and quiet — consisting of two or three streets, concrete roads and just a few other amenities. Perhaps because it's a military outpost, the town's PA system broadcasts politically correct songs in the mornings, the only time I've seen this happen in Tibet. Clearly, the winds of change have not blown their way to this remote town.

The road from Gamba to Tingkye reminded us why so many drivers refused to take this route. The 130-kilometre stretch took five hours. We saw a few tractors and horse-drawn carts — but no other cars. En route we crossed mountain passes, like Xixiabangma, Luozi, Makalu — all snow-covered mountains above 8,000 metres. It felt like the car was cruising in the sky. We marveled at the snowy peaks, beautiful meadows, Gobi desert and mirror-like lakes. The sweeping vistas were like scenes from well-made westerns. The ride — although awe-inspiring, was rocky and uncomfortable. We finally arrived in old Tingri at 10 o'clock that night.





Tingri is a must for every Qomolangma visitor. Most travellers stay here and take their meals and acclimatise to the altitude. Of the world's 12 mountains above 8,000 metres, Tingri has four of them.

Tingri is a very special place. To travellers it may be just an en-route supply station, but for border trade between China and Nepal it is a key hub. Every day many Tibetans and Nepalese Sherpas criss-cross the hilly paths of the Himalayans, bringing back and forth goods for border trade like ants moving home. They are mostly in the business of transporting goods, but during climbing season many also act as part-time guides.

## Booming Border Trade

Being so closely situated, it's no wonder the

Nepalese and Chinese on the border have close ties. They've carved out a living for themselves out of the innumerable narrow paths and little-known passes of the Himalayas. They buy rice and spices from Nepal, then move miscellaneous goods from Xigazê to Nepal and India. As for the future train extension here, Tingri's border dwellers are not really worried about losing business. The railway lines would possibly pass through Tingri, then go from Zham to Nepal, but the transport in the mountainous ranges of the China-Nepal border would still depend on horse caravans and sherpas. Even though cars can be driven straight to the Qomolangma Base Camp, daily transportation is still on horseback.

From the Base Camp to Zham, you'll be rewarded with views of Xixiabangma, the world's 14th highest mountain at 8,012 metres altitude. The main peak's

shape is actually more beautiful than the Qomolangma, but nothing can take away from the fact that the Qomolangma is the world's tallest mountain. In fact, the Tibetans don't hold the Qomolangma in such high esteem as people elsewhere do. Once we got over the last pass at 5,000 metres above sea level, we began driving downhill, with an altitude drop of more than 1,000 metres. By the time we got close to Nyalam, the views had changed from a depressing yellow to lively green.

## From Uninhabited Land to Sub-tropical Rainforest

It is a 30-kilometre ride from Nyalam's inspection station to Zham. As the altitude dropped sharply, we started to take off layers of clothing. It often rains in Zham in summer, with waterfalls hanging curtain-like in the mountains, spraying the entire valley with mist. In the morning we awoke in uninhabited land at 5,200 metres altitude, and watched the sunrise on the world's tallest mountain wearing thick down parkas. Just half a day later, we were dressed in shorts trekking in the sub-tropical rainforest. Seeing such vast contrast in a short 30-odd kilometres — we could not imagine how the future Himalayan railway would be built, from the 3,980metre-high Nyalam to the Zham friendship bridge at 1,770 metres above sea level, taking the train would be more like taking a lift.

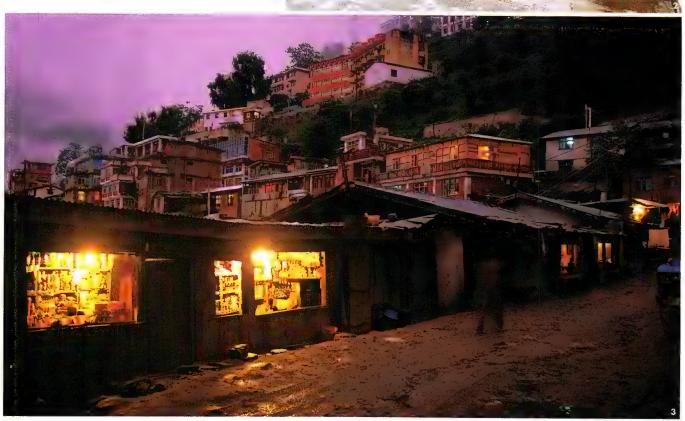
The town of Zham is built along winding mountainous roads, and because it's so steep, many houses are perched in mid-air. As the area is swathed

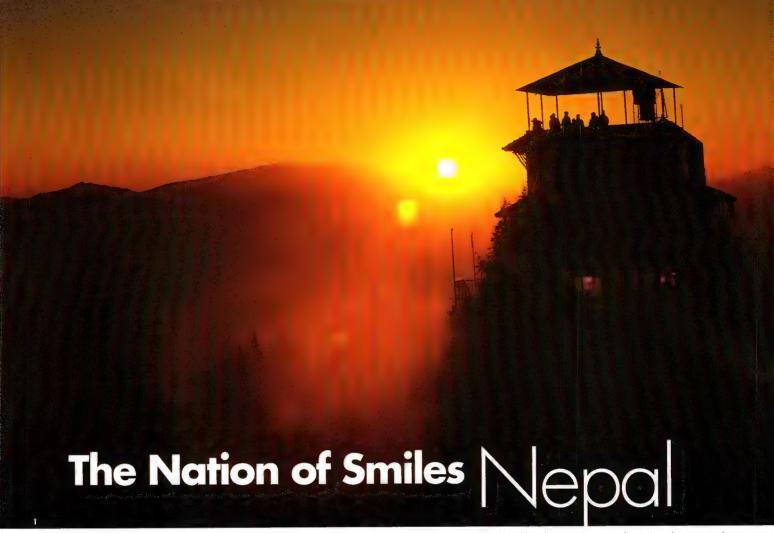
in mist and fog most of the time, Zham from afar appears like an ethereal airborne city. Here Han people make up most of the business community, with the occasional Nepalese, but very few Tibetans. There are Nepalese trucks (mostly Indian-made Tata's) stopped on the side of the road, printed with colourful patterns, with two eyes of the Buddha painted below the headlamps — totally unlike Chinese trucks.

Because of the 2-hour time difference between China and Nepal, even at midnight Zham showed no signs of slowing down, all sorts of shops were still in business, there were so many hair salons and karaoke lounges it was hard to believe this is just a little border town.

- I. Magnificent sunrise on Qomolangma.
- 2. Zham's China-Nepal border bridge — Friendship Bridge, Nepalese traders cross the bridge laden with packages. (by Xie Guanghui)
- 3. Zham port of the China-Nepal border is still a hive of business activity at night. (by Xie Guanghui)







- 1. Watching a Himalayan sunrise in Nepal's Nagarkot. (by Stephen Or)
- 2. Women selling traditional music records on the streets of Kathmandu. (by Stephen Or)
- 3. Overloaded bus from Nepal's border town, Godari, to its capital, Kathmandu. (by Gesang Jimei)
- 4. One of Kathmandu's most popular tourist attractions the monkey temple. (by Stephen Or)

The QTR under construction extends southwards from Lhasa to Yadong, to form the future South Asia Arterial. India — with the scars of 1962 still fresh in the psyche, has been cool to China's plans. It is not certain that by 2015 the Himalayan Railway will be going to India. Nepal, in contrast, has been very enthusiastic about the southward extension of the QTR from Lhasa — in the hope of playing a bigger role in the South Asia Land Bridge project.

# Nepal Wants China-India Railway

Nepal's king Gyanendra has told China and

India's leaders many times that Nepal wants to be a transport hub and transfer terminal between China and India. Nepal's deputy prime minister and foreign minister K.P. Sharma Oli said while visiting Tibet this year, that the Nepalese government wanted the railway to be extended to the China-Nepal border and hoped to make it happen with China's help. All signs are pointing to the Himalayan railway extending westwards, past Zham to Nepal's Kathmandu, then connecting with India's railway network.

Uncertainties exist as to whether the Himalayan railway can be completed by 2015. China has





accumulated extensive experience in building the QTR, but what must be taken into account is this branch of the China-Nepal border railway must cross the Himalayas — an enormous technical challenge. Even if the technical issues can be overcome, it would take a massive amount of investment, both financially and in manpower. Based on a construction cost of 29 million yuan per kilometre — the same as for the QTR, the 400-km route from Xigazê to Zham would need investment of over 11 billion yuan. Currently, China and Nepal's annual trade amounts to about US\$200 million. Can bilateral transport volume justify such a huge outlay - not counting the massive maintenance costs of such a railway in the future. From an economic angle, building the Himalayan railway does not seem fully viable.

So where lies the future of the Himalayan railway? It's almost impossible to predict; only time will tell—and there's still plenty of that between now and 2015.

## **Chinese Tourists Get VIP Treatment**

As soon as you enter Nepal from the Zham friendship bridge, you experience the friendliness of this smiling nation. Most checkpoint officers are middle-aged men, who do only a cursory inspection of Chinese tourists' baggage. But the Nepalese residents have to open all their luggage and are also questioned by the officers. Once you get past Nepalese customs, you're in the town of Godari, which is much smaller than Zham, with only a few restaurants and shops. Most tourists are here to wait for the bus or to charter a car to the capital city of Kathmandu. We hired a 'Tata' car and left Godari. Nepal used to be a British colony, so cars are also right-steered; driving on Nepalese roads felt a little like being back in Hong Kong.

Nepal's Arniko road is also called Chinese Road. It was built with China's aid in 1967. On the way we wound our way through the valleys, meeting only a few cars along the way. Most on-coming traffic consisted of large trucks going from Nepal to Tibet, and their style of driving can only be characterised as crazy. If you point your camera at them, they will acknowledge you and also strike funny poses — an illustration of Nepalese friendliness. We went through

South Asia Land Bridge is a railway connection that bridges the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean. It starts from eastern China's Shanghai, Lianyungang, Qingdao or Tianjin, Iraverses through Xi'an, Lanzhou, Xining, Lhasa, Xigazê to Zham (China-Nepal port), then through Tatabani (Nepal-China port), Kathmandu, Birguni (Nepal-India port), to India's Pamo, New Delhi, Mumbai or Pakistan's Karachi. It is a planned railway transport network between China, India and Pakistan.

many Nepalese military checkpoints. The officers were very friendly when we showed our SAR passports; unlike the locals or European and American tourists who were told to get out of their cars for inspections, we were allowed to go through first.

In less than three hours we were in downtown Kathmandu — no skyscrapers, mostly buildings of three or four storeys, painted in bright colours. The city resembles China in the '70s or '80s, crowded and chaotic, but the roadside advertising and unique architecture also remind you that you are in exotic territory.

As I breathed in the spice-scented air, I said quietly: Nemastle Nepal, hello Nepal! Here I am!



# Getting to Nopel

Capital: Kathmandu Area: 140,800 square kilometres Language: Ne Religion: Mainly Hinduism Currency: Nepalese rupee (NPR)

Language: Nepalese, English is popular in the tourist areas.

Visas: Holders of BNO or SAR passports need visas, this could be applied for in Hong Kong, or get visas upon arrival (US\$30). Chinese tourists do not have to pay any visa fees, they can get visas on arrival at the port of entry. But before Chinese residents are allowed to leave China, immigration officers will ask to see effective visas, so it's still necessary to have travel visas stamped in the passport in advance.

Documents needed: ID card; one photo Processing time: 2 working days Cost: HK\$240

#### Nepalese Embassy in Hong Kong

Address: Rm 1206, Concordia Plaza, 1 Science Museum Road, Tsim Sha Tsui East, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Tel: (852) 2369 7813

#### Nepalese Embassy in Beijing

Address: 1 Xiliu Street, San Li Tun, Beijing. Tel: (10) 6532 1795

## Nepalese Consulate in Lhasa

Address: 13 Norbulingka Road, Lhasa. Fel: (891) 6322 881, 6836 890

Climate: Nepal has a temperate to sub-tropical climate, every April to September is monsoon season and unsuitable for travel.

From October to the following March are ideal times for travel with pleasant dry weather.

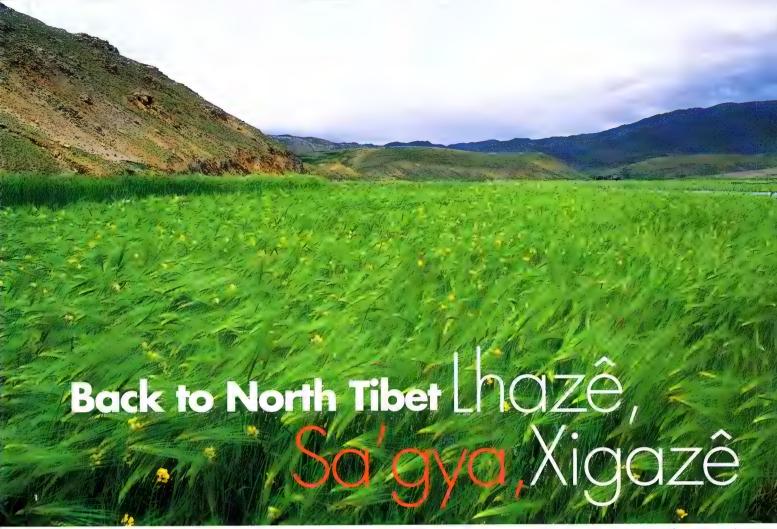
Food and accommodation: There are hotels everywhere in the bustling district of Thamel, at 4-5 USD/night, with bathrooms.

## **Transportation**

By air: There are two services per week from Lhasa to Kathmandu (an extra one is added in peak season), tickets cost 2,400 yuan, the fare is never discounted.

Zham border controls - friendship bridge border 10 yuan/person

Cars usually cost 2,000 rupees, which can be shared among four people, it takes around three hours to get to Kathmandu. The Nepal border town is called Godari, should you choose to cross the border in the morning from Zham, you can take a bus from Godari to Barabise, then transfer to Kathmandu, it costs 160 rupees or so, but the trip takes around 6-7 hours.



- Beautiful pastoral scenery en route from Lhazê to Xigazê. (by Stephen Or)
- 2. Returning herds of sheep pass the splendid Sakya Monastery creating a startling contrast. (by Xie Guanghui)
- 3. Xigazê's mini Potala Palace stands on the old town's Zongshan hilltop. (by Stephen Or)

China-Nepal Highway is basically the only land passage for cars from China to travel to south Asian regions (Natoi La Himalayan pass and Pulan only service border residents); all cross-border travellers must travel to and from India, Bhutan and Bangladesh via Nepal. Yadong may be right next to Bhutan and India's Sikkim state, but we were still going back to Tibet from Nepal.

We left early in the morning to avoid Nepal's long border traffic queues. By lunchtime, we had arrived in Lhazê. This is where the China-Nepal Highway meets the Xinjiang-Tibet Highway. The southwest direction takes you to the Qomolangma and Zham port; the northwest direction points to Ali. Because it is such a transportation hub, the peak tourist season is very busy. Lhazê is famous for its Tibetan knives, but unfortunately we had no time to pick out some souvenirs — as we wanted to make it to Sakya Monastery before sunset.

# Sakya Monastery — Brilliant or Bleak?

After Lhazê, take the China-Nepal Highway eastwards for Sakya bridge — over 30 km away, turn into a side road, then go for another 40 km on dirt roads and you'll get to Sakya Monastery. From afar, Sa'gya County can be seen at the foot of a greyish-white hill, on the hill, there are groups of ruins, a few average-height white towers shining brightly in the sunset.

Throughout history, there have been many schools

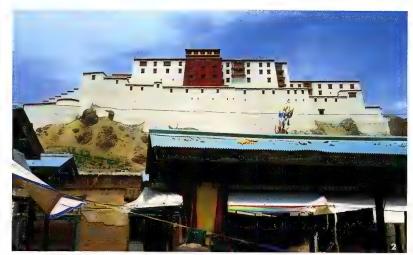
of Tibetan Buddhism. One of the most famous was the Sakya school. It was founded in the 11th century, 'Sakya' means 'grey and white soil', and refers to the fact that the earliest temple was set on a grey and white hill, so it was called Sakya Monastery. In the mid-13th century, the Sakya school of Buddhism came under the Yuan emperor's governance. The Yuan emperor appointed the fifth generation Chogyal Phatpa of the Sa'gya school as governor, to build the Sakya local government and administer affairs for Tibet. Sa'gya became Tibet's centre of politics, religion and culture at the time, drawing a constant stream of people from all over the region coming to pray, study or hear the scriptures.

To get to Sakya Monastery, you first cross the dirty and waste-strewn alleys. The moment you enter, the grandness that automatically induces a hush is in sharp contrast to the rundown and decrepit housing nearby. We were too late and had missed visiting hours. The entire temple was quiet, many halls had their doors closed, occasionally you see a few old Lama's pass by, the tapping sound of their walking canes reverberating endlessly in the ancient cavernous halls. This is Sakya Monastery. We could hardly reconcile its glorious past with the surrounding squalor of today.

## Xigazê's Mini-Potala Palace

We bid the monastery goodbye and headed east to the largest city in northern Tibet to Xigazê. The city enjoys a relatively young 500-year history. It was not as well known as Rujiangzi in ancient times. Tashi Lhunpo monastery is Tibet's biggest for Tibetan Gelug Buddhism. It also houses Jamba — the world's biggest gold-plated Buddha statue. Tashi Lhunpo temple is where past generations of the Panchen masters have resided, but the present 11th Panchen spends most of his time studying in Beijing, so the temple has the feel of a museum rather than a monastery. Unlike Jokhana Temple, which attracts hordes of believers, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery may be no stranger to crowds, but they're mostly tourists.

If you walk uphill along the prayer path next to the monastery, on the top of Zongshan in the old town area you will see a building under construction that bears a resemblance to Lhasa's Potala Palace. I asked an old Tibetan on the street what it was and 'Potala Palace!' was the smiling reply I got. It turns out the new edifice is being rebuilt at the former address of the Xigazê government. It's said that the Tibetans here heard about the glorious Potala Palace and wanted to build one of their own, but they couldn't get the architectural blueprints. The craftsmen had the bright idea to carve a model out of a radish, but of course the extremely dry weather in Tibet meant that by the time they returned to Xigazê — the model had shrunk. So the palace that was built on the basis of this model was a size smaller than the real thing. People in Xigazê joked that the castle was the 'radish pickle' Potala Palace. In recent years the tourism boom in Xigazê has raised fresh interest in having the castle rebuilt, but even then it is still on a much smaller

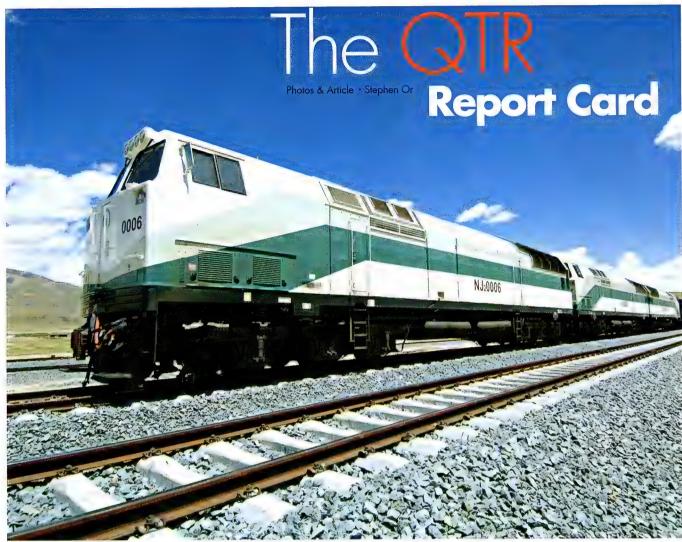


scale compared to the Potala Palace in Lhasa.

There are two ways to get from Xigazê to Lhasa; the new road (China-Nepal Highway) passes through Qüxü, Nyemo, Dagzhuka, with unique views of the Yarlung Zangbo River valleys along the way; the old route (or south route) passes Yamdrok Lake — one of Tibet's three sacred lakes. and Gyangzê — the city of heroes. The proposed extension of the QTR overlaps with the China-Nepal Highway. But frankly speaking, the old route has better views and a wider range of them. We arrived in Lhasa at 8 o'clock in the evening, marking an end to our 'Future of Himalayan Railway' journey.

Translated by Cheng Lei





After one year in service, how are the railway's trains operating? Are the carriages maintained properly? How do the meals on board taste? Have the areas along the railway become polluted or affected by its operation? Our reporter recently took the Train K917 from Lanzhou to Lhasa to find the answers to these questions for our readers.

## **How is Train Safety?**

Over the last year, there have been some problems on the QTR and its trains, but generally the operation has been normal. Each passenger must fill in a Passenger's Health Record to board the train, an indication of the railway's strong concern for safety. It is advisable to take good care of your record or else you may end up waiting till everyone else has got onto the train before you can fill out another one.

The trains employed on this railway are among the most advanced ones in China. At the junctions between the carriages there are screens displaying the current train conditions. All the hermitically pressurized carriages are equipped with an air conditioning system that disperses oxygen along with

normal air. In addition, every berth or seat has its own individual access oxygen inhaler for passengers who have breathing difficulties. Since the inhaler provides oxygen-enriched air, it is not advisable to breathe in too much of it; its dryness can easily cause throat inflammation and nosebleed. Besides, there may be a severe consequence, that is, the passenger would become dependent on the oxygen and therefore find it harder to acclimatise to the high altitude air after arrival in Lhasa.

To ensure the safety of passengers, there are specially appointed medical personnel on duty on the trains, and first-aid medicines are available in each carriage, including 'Gaoyuan An' and 'Hong Jing Tian', in case of altitude sickness. As soon as the trains arrive at Golmud, train attendants distribute single-use oxygen inhalers and train facility guides. And if you are still worried, you need not be — there are ambulances from the military districts on standby at each large station, such as Lhasa. Therefore, to enter Tibet by train is generally safer and more comfortable than by bus or air.







## **How Are the Trains?**

A previous report said the facilities on the mainland's express trains had deteriorated badly after only three months of use. The lavatory taps had disappeared, the door handles to the toilets were damaged, and the carpets in the carriages had many stains... Then, was the situation on the trains of the QTR comparable one year later after it started operation?

Once aboard, I saw train attendants in high spirits

and in attractive uniforms. Then how about the taps and the toilet door handles? They were all there. And the carpets in the carriages? They were as clean as new ones. The train looks like it's new, not at all like one that has been running for nearly a year. The toilets are clean and do not smell. To preserve the plateau environment, the toilets are specially designed with vacuum collection containers that prevent leakage onto the tracks below. Rubbish is compacted into a solid mass in the bins at both ends of the carriages

- 1. An engine specially designed by the GM Company in America for the Qinghai-Tibet Railway. (by Jue Guo)
- 2. Train attendants in high spirits standing at a door to greet the passengers getting aboard.
- 3. Carts sell snacks containing a lot of vegetables at a cost of 15 yuan each. (by Ma Yiu Chun)
- 4. Besides tourists, people who make their way to Lhasa include Tibetans on a pilgrimage, countryside workers seeking jobs or peddlers looking for opportunities.



and is transported inland for further handling.

The soft berth carriages could be considered as 'star-level' services, as each berth is equipped with a LCD screen that instantly displays the scenes along the railway and the local nature and Tibetan folk customs. These screens are almost like personal guides. Each carriage has several compartments that have four berths and a door that can be locked for privacy, making it perfect for three or four good friends travelling together.

As for a backpacker travelling alone, a hard berth is a good choice too. Similar in size to the soft berth, the hard berth compartment contains an additional two berths and is half the price. The hard seats are much cheaper but is unadvisable. Nowadays they are not as hard as the ones in old Chinese trains, and are almost as soft and comfortable, and somewhat wider, as those on a plane. So why not take one? The main reasons are the obstruction and the smell. Hard seats are mostly occupied by Tibetans on a pilgrimage, countryside workers seeking jobs or peddlers looking for opportunities in Lhasa. These families usually carry large amounts of luggage of various sizes that block the aisles. In addition, the whole carriage has a strong smell of buttered tea due to the Tibetan people's dislike of bathing.

## How Are the Meals?

The expression says 'When in Rome....', therefore Chinese rice is naturally the main course. However, it

is hard to cook rice properly on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau due to its high altitude. Then, can any food be cooked well on the trains? Is the food edible? As mentioned already, the carriages are hermitically pressurized and the air pressure is almost the same as that in the plain, so cooking is not a problem. Besides, pressure cookers can also help.

The elegant dining carriages on each train have a bar counter. If you are not fortunate enough to buy a berth ticket, you can sit in the dining carriage and, for the cost of one drink, enjoy the splendid scenes outside on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. In addition, carts come around selling snacks, each priced at 15 yuan. Comparatively they contain more vegetables, as they can help in the prevention of altitude sickness. If these types of food don't suit you, you can carry some instant noodles and get sterilized and filtered boiling water from a machine in each carriage to prepare them at your convenience.

## How is the Scenery?

It was rainy season when I set out from Lanzhou. Once into Xining, the capital city of Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, I noticed some buds on the trees along the railroad. Spring comes later in the plateau than on the plain. When the train entered the Golmud Gobi desert, a dust storm whipped up in the vast desert. At the Nagqu Pasture in northern Tibet, it snowed heavily, and when I finally reached Lhasa, the destination, I found it in bright and sunny. This 'city













- 1. Each star-level soft-berth carriages is equipped with an LCD screen. (by Li Dan)
- $2\sim 8.$  The conditions inside the carriages one year after the trains started operation.
- 9. A Tibetan on her way to visit her relatives in Lhasa with a one year old baby on the train. (by Ma Yiu Chun)

## MASSONEES UNAVER





- 1. The Qinghai-Tibetan trains pass through the Tanggula Mountains. (by Ma Yiu Chun)
- 2. The Amdo Railway Station where tourists are allowed to get off and take pictures. (by Ma Yiu Chun)
- 3. Tourists on the train kill time by knitting sweaters.
- Three bus lines connect the Lhasa Railway Station and the downtown area.
- 5. One important thing people do when they first arrive at the Lhasa Railway Station is to take a memorial picture.
- 6. The Railway Station Shop that has just opened this year.
- 7. The first flyover was not in use until 1 May this year.
- 8. The long-distance bus station near the Railway Station is still not in use.

of sunshine' deserves the reputation it enjoys indeed.

The journey totals 2,188 km from Lanzhou to Lhasa, passing by scenic sites such as the Qinghai Lake, Qaidam Basin, Kunlun Mountains, Hoh Xil areas, Tuotuo River, Co Nag Lake, Tanggula Mountains and Nagqu Pasture. In particular, the Co Nag Lake can only be seen when passengers take the train, for the Qinghai-Tibetan Highway doesn't pass by this place. All along the road, many people are attracted by the splendid plateau scenes, including the blue sky, white clouds, pastures, snow-capped mountains, deserts and lakes — many passengers stretch out the train windows, constantly taking pictures.

Most trains leading to the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau only stop at several large stations such as Golmud, Nagqu and Lhasa. As a specialized tourist train, K917 stops at more stations than the trains coming from Beijing, Shanghai and some other places, but trains have never stopped at the scenic site stations such as the Co Nag Lake, the Qomolangma and

Tanggula Mountains since the railway became available two years ago. The stations have been specially designed for some luxury tourist trains, and will be open to passengers in 2008. They are constructed in five-star style, and the glass windows of the carriages are extraordinarily large so that passengers can enjoy the scenes outside. But hearsay says that the fare for the luxury trains will be one thousand 'dollars' for one single passenger, and that will be US 'dollars'. 'The scenes you're seeing are worth one thousand US dollars!' a train attendant made his sale promotion as such when the train passed by the Co Nag Railway Station.

The train schedules show clearly at which stations the trains will stop, but if passengers on the berth carriages are not scheduled to get off, the train attendants generally would not trouble themselves to open the door; meanwhile, the doors to the hard-seat carriages are always opened as passengers would be getting on and off the train frequently. If you'd like to get off for a walk and take some pictures, you can consult the train attendants in advance. If the berth carriages will not be opened, then you can go to a hard-seat carriage before the train arrives at a station and wait there to get off.

As the train travelled through the Hoh Xil area and the northern Tibetan pasture, I frequently heard the passengers shouting, 'Wow, look at the Tibetan antelopes!' 'Wow, wild Tibetan wild donkeys' and 'Wow, wild yaks!' The exclamations could be heard again and again. They had mistaken the yaks and sheep raised by Tibetan households along the railroad as some wild animals — unless they were using a telescope or had come across some deaf wild animals. Otherwise, why would any normal animals remain alongside the railroad for your 'inspection' —











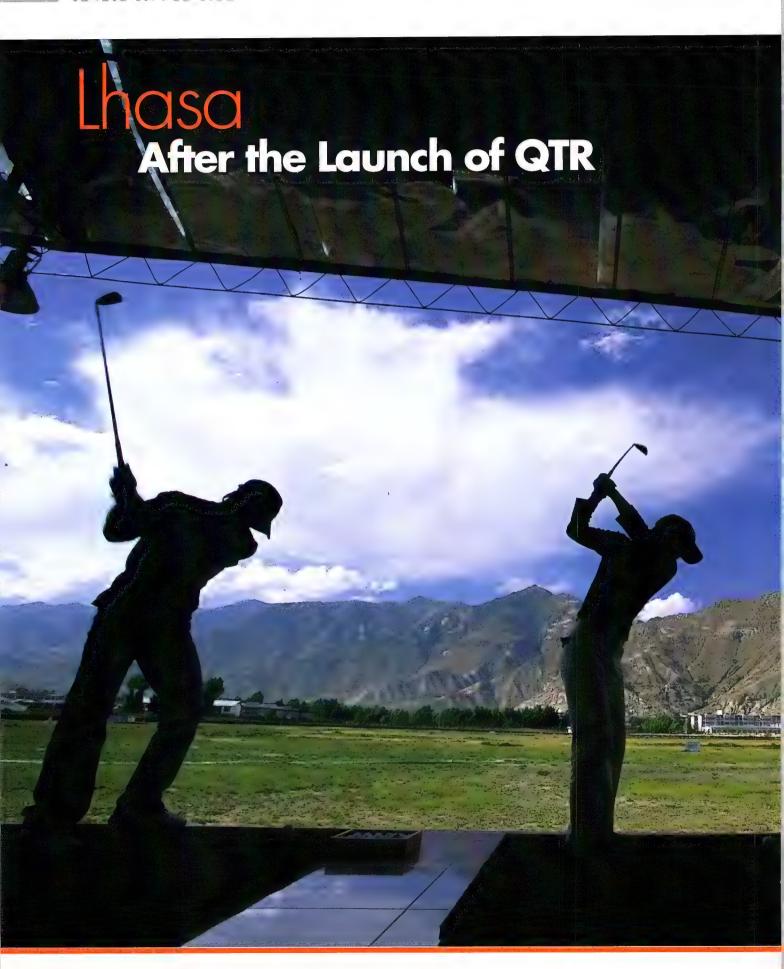
they would surely have escaped the horrible noise of the running trains! And you'll have to have a camera lens of at least 300 mm if you want to take a picture of Tibetan antelopes on a train; otherwise you could only catch the white hair on their rumps.

## Lhasa as the Destination

After one entire day through the plateau, the train finally reaches Lhasa at about 9 p.m., its destination. It is sunset in Lhasa then, and the light is most ideal for taking pictures. So don't anxiously seek a vehicle to take you to the downtown area; go in front of the station and take a memorial picture. Beside the railway station there is a newly constructed long distance bus station that will be in operation soon, with buses to Nyingchi, Xigazê and other places setting off from here. Because of its long distance from the downtown areas and the scarcity of regular buses, the Lhasa Railway Station is quiet all day long except when the trains arrive. It is too late to find any taxis for the downtown area, for few drivers are willing to wait for passengers due to the minimal number of trains. Fortunately, three bus lines run into the urban area,



and passengers can first take a bus to the Lhasa Department Store at the centre of Lhasa, and then change to other buses for other places. With the opening of the Liuwu Great Bridge travel time and distance between the railway station and the downtown area has been greatly reduced. Over the bridge, the Potala Palace is in sight. So, I'm coming, Lhasa!





For Lhasa, the first anniversary of the operation of the QTR represents a critical point and a watershed of the new and the old. Our reporters revisited the highland city, trying to capture the changes brought about by the train.

Article • Stephen Or



- 1. Golfing at the golf driving range in the suburb of Lhasa is a vogue kill-time for the nouveau riche of Lhasa. (by Wang Miao)
- 2. A fake BMW reflects the craze for luxury goods has swept to Lhasa. (by Stephen Or)





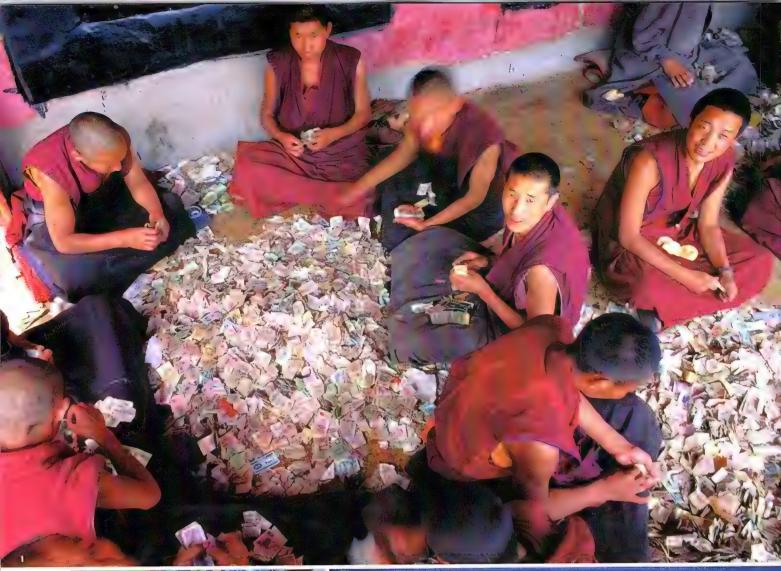


The most direct change to Lhasa by the train was a complete facelift of the city. No more dusty clay roads, no more littering, no more clogged traffic... What we saw now was straightforward streets, green flower beds and orderly traffic. Everything was fixed anew, conveying a sense of vigour and life. In the minds of Lhasa people, the train meant advancement and openness. Before the service of the train, Lhasa was a title that connoted backward and remote. Like other cities of a long history in China, Lhasa had distinctive conflicts between urbanization and traditional culture.

# Inflow of Goods by In-bound Train

The most direct benefit of the QTR was the yearly 2.50 million tons of goods. Take a 12-lb. watermelon for example. The water-melons transported into Tibet each year numbered 20 million. In the past 95% of the goods into and out of Lhasa relied on highway transportation. The high transport cost drove up the prices in Lhasa by 25%, compared with those in other Chinese cities. With train service, a substantive amount of goods was transported into Lhasa by train. Daily goods wholesalers in Lhasa cropped up.

- 1. In the biggest farmer's market of Lhasa, the variety of vegetable and fruit was surprising. The days when vegetable was more expensive than meat were gone with the rumbling train. (by Gesang Dawa)
- 2. In the electric appliance specialty shop in a department store of Lhasa, Hong Kong cantapop star Maggie Cheung became their brand spokesperson. (by Gesang Dawa)
- 3. Different cuisines from different regions ramen and burger from the USA, Yonghe bean milk from Taiwan, stone pot soak rice from Korea and a myriad of bars & restaurants-flourished in Lhasa. (by Stephen Or)

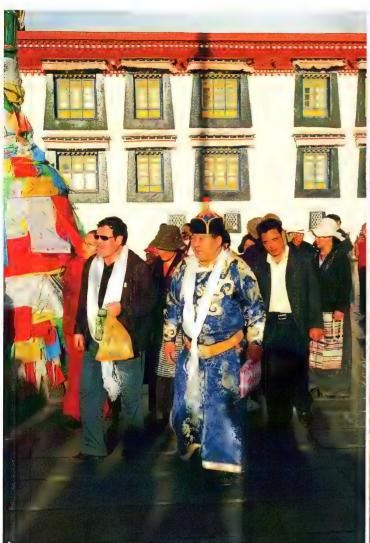






# Influx of Tourists and Pilgrims

The biggest benefit brought about to Lhasa after one year of train service was the one million visitors per year. In the last year the figure was 2.5 million. It is estimated that the figure this year will hit 3 million, excluding Tibetan pilgrims. The Qinghai-Tibet Railway, Lhasa and Potala Palace were the must-go scenic spots for visitors.









- 1. Tourists flock to Lhasa. The donation to monasteries is snowballing. (by Yang Chubin)
- 2. A Tibetan child is begging to tourists in Lhasa. There will be more beggars in town as more tourists come. (by Stephen Or)
- 3. A group of Tibetan women are selling souvenirs around the tourist coaches at the gate of Potala Palace. (by Stephen Or)
- 4. Pilgrims may not be Tibetans. Mongolians who believe in Tibetan Buddhism will also pay homage to Lhasa. (by Stephen Or)
- 5. Each Tibetan pilgrim will take a picture in front of the Potala Palace. This group of lamas are from Gangzi Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. (by Wang
- 6. Now the prayer wheels are sanctified in batch, not one by one as it was, in a Buddhist dedication ceremony. (by Ma Yiu Chun)
- 7. Thanks to the rocketing number of tourists, the nun of a monastery is busy earning money. However, the daily scripture chanting has to be done. Money collecting and scripture chanting are magically merged at the same time. (by Stephen Or)

# 

## Entertainment in Lhasa

In non-stop rumbles, the train carries cars of tourists to Lhasa. It also brings about the entertainment of inland and coastal China. Walking westward along Beijing Road, one would pass by over 30 entertainment shops — foot massage, body massage, karaoke, night club, etc. Lhasa has become a city full of neon lights and night-life.

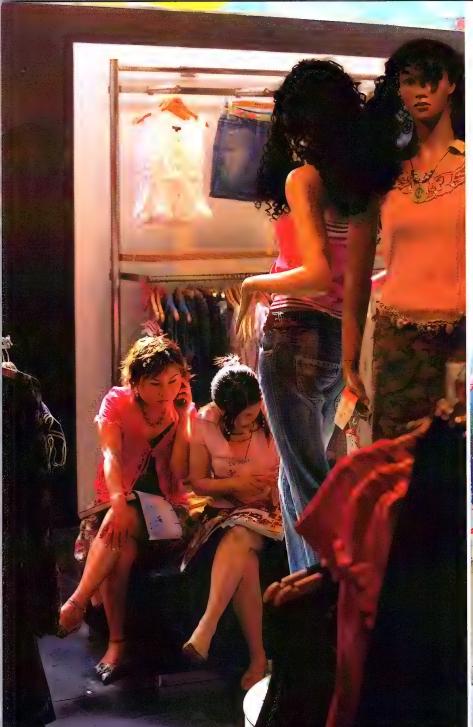






- 1. Spa is not new in Lhasa. The talk that Tibetans washed the body three times in a lifetime, on birth, wedding and funeral days, is out. (by Stephen Or)
- 2. Disco and slow rock bar have found their ways into Lhasa. Most of the customers are Tibetan youngsters. Well, not everyone can rock  $^\prime n$  roll on the 4,000-metre highland. (by Stephen Or)
- 3. Singing and dancing houses Tibetan style (or music and dance hall) are changing to cope with the fiercely market competition. (by Ma Yiu Chun)  $\frac{1}{2}$





## **Trendy Lhasa**

Lhasa is by no means backward by the standard of its inland and coastal cousins. Tibetan girls in fashionable dress are seen here and there at the gate of the department store of Lhasa, in Beijing Road Central. In the past two years, more and more garment brand name shops, including a full line of Chinese famous brands, were opened in town. The cosmetics from all over the world — not to mention the domestic brands — are on shelf in the department stores. Lhasa is a trendy city amongst the global consumerist culture.



- Fashionable ladies are picking dresses in the department store of Lhasa. (by Zhao Yanzhi)
- 2. The poster of the nationally popular Twelve Girls Band is seen everywhere in Lhasa. (by Shi Baoxiu)
- 3. Another name of beauty is women. Manicure and pedicure, which have been in trend in China recently, are also present in Lhasa. (by Zhao Yanzhi)



# Lhasa today...



Lovers from Guangzhou (Mr Mo & Ms Pan):

four st (from Hong Manager : After the train is here, Lhasa is just like Shenzhen. It's bustling but looks a bit chaotic.



An immigrant, dubbed Tibet drifter, who stayed in Lhasa for ten years (from Hunan Province)

## Zeolous cydist aged over 70 (retiree):

After train is extended here; Lhasa is not so backward as I had expected. It is easy to visit Lhasa by bike on the straightforward asphaltic road.





child lawing in Barkor Street (Lhasa local): The train comes and I can have a lot of snacks. I can see a lot of foreigners. I can go to Beijing and Shanghai by train...

# Taxi driver (from Gansu Province)

Mantes, diget, and think from the part of the after become graph at taken

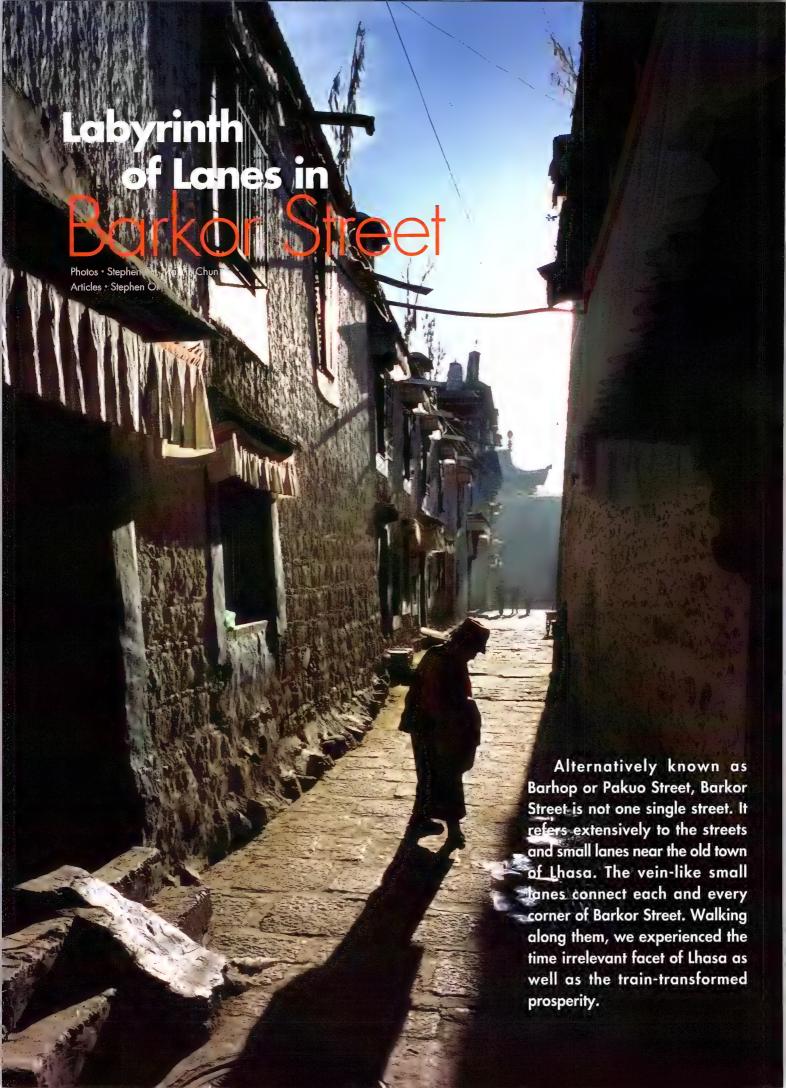
work that is it is it is a second more tourists visit Lhasa. The lamas and nuns in monasteries and nunneries have to receive them and do not have enough time for scripture chanting.



Mr Zhao who sell souvenirs in Barkor Street (from Anhui Province)

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## **'Heavenly Road' Barkor Street**

A pop song titled Heavenly Road dedicated to the Qinghai-Tibet Railway is a great hit. In the minds of many Tibetans, the true 'heavenly road' is Barkor Street, a 'Holy Road.' According to Tibetan Buddhism, a 'Holy Road' is the road to heaven. Tibetans believe that circling along Barkor Street for a number of times can help uplift them to the human or even the highest deva realm in the six realms of samsara (three bad realms, hell, starved ghost and animal; and three good realms, human, Asura and deva). The circling around a monastery or a holy place is called 'scripture circling' literally. According to the length, the pilgrimage circuit, or kora, is of three types, inner, intermediate and outer circuits. The inner circuit, called Nangkor in Tibetan, refers to walking on the passageway outside the main hall of Jokhana Temple. The statue of Buddha Sakyamuni of the same size as his real person at the age of twelve is worshipped in the temple. The intermediate circuit refers to circling around Jokhang Temple on the streets outside. It is called Barkor in Tibetan, hence the name of the area. There is still the outer circuit clockwise around the city, called Lingkor.

#### Place for Men and Gods

As Lhasa is the centre of Tibet, Barkor Street is the centre of Lhasa, and Jokhang Temple, its innermost centre. Lhasa means 'Land of Buddha' in Tibetan. Tibetans tend to call Barkor Street centralised on Jokhang Temple 'Lhasa'. In other words, Lhasa flourished with the building of Jakhang Temple.

It is said that in the mid-seventh century when Tibetan King Srongsten Gampo led his tribe and migrated to the current Lhasa Plain, it was a marsh. They set up camps nearby, and built Jokhang Temple. As the statue of Buddha Sakyamuni of the same size as his real person at the age of 12 was worshipped in the temple, it became the holiest place for Tibetans. A common street outside the temple became a pilgrimage circuit. After the 15th century, Jokhana Temple became the activity centre of Tibetan Buddhism. More monks and lay believers paid homage to the temple. Monasteries and houses to accommodate the pilgrims appeared. As people gathered, businessmen flocked to the place. Chinese shops dealt with tea, silk and porcelain; Nepalese shops, Indian spices and handicraft; local monastery shops, sheep wool, pulu (Tibetan wool fabric) and Buddhist articles. With the presence of the shops, Barkor Street turned from a pure religious holy place into a place for men and gods. The Six Syllable Mantra, Om Mani Padme Hum, chanted by the pilgrims had a joking variation, 'All money come my home". It seems that the nature of Barkor Street had





been predestined.

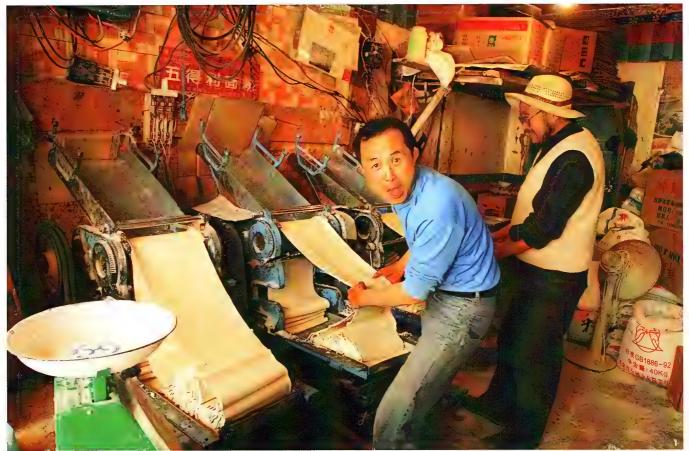
## **New Discovery in Each Lane**

The lanes in Barkor Street were numerous. The houses on both sides of the lanes were old-fashioned Tibetan style. Visitors were easily lost inside the lane labyrinth. Being lost means at times a chance to see the unseen. New discoveries were in each lane and behind each door.

Walking on the granite surface of Barkor Street each time, I couldn't help following the steps of the pilgrims in the clockwise direction. I seemed to be guided by a magical force into the depth of the lanes. The passers-by — pilgrims, lamas, nuns, tourists, beggars and businessmen; the smells of ghee, cypress burnt in rituals, Tibetan incense, beef and mutton; and the noises of scripture chanting, greetings and bargaining... all were combined and converged to an intensified curiosity of the very source of the lanes.

The intermediate circle, or Barkor, starts from and ends at Jokhang Temple. The small square where pilgrims made prostration was the place I loved.

- 1. The vein-like small lanes connect each and every corner of Barkor Street. Walking along them, we experienced the time irrelevant facet of Lhasa. (by Stephen Or)
- 2. Snooker in open air is the most popular recreation in Barkor Street. The Tibetan kid who played snooker held his pet mastiff in arms.
- 3. Tibetans love to go to the Tibetan sweet tea houses. Like hardcore Cantonese teahouse fans, they form the habit over years. (by Ma Yiu Chun)





#### Lane Residents

The truest sense of Lhasa can be experienced by walking deep into the lanes of Barkor Street. Barkor Street consists of numerous small monasteries which used to be the representative offices in Lhasa of the monasteries all over Tibet. Some of them were gone forever, some others became compounds of different purposes, and still some kept the sutra halls. Tibetans would pay homage to some in addition to circling round Barkor Street. Businessmen who came to Lhasa with a dream to get rich lived in the appropriated

compounds. They did not mind our intrusion into their premises. Smiling, they resumed the work in hand. Some of them were the descendants of pilgrims who came a long way here. Due to the lengthy journey home, they stayed and ran small businesses near Jokhang Temple. Now businessmen in Barkor Street were mostly Kangba people from Sichuan, who were known as shrewd businessmen and good warriors. Another group of good businessmen, the Muslims from Qinghai and Gansu provinces, lived in the depth of the lanes. They were new comers dealing with souvenir business in Barkor Street. They came in the past few years to seize the chance of the thriving tourism. Now there were two mosques near Barkor Street. More and more Muslims gathered around Barkor Street and showed a trend of outnumbering the

In the lanes near Chongsaikang (Trom Si Khang) Market by the side of the Muslim settlement, a large number of stalls were selling a myriad of goods. The goods here were different from those sold on the Barkor kora. Some of the streets were specialized in ghee, brick tea and other daily necessities for Tibetans. On some other streets, Han people were selling radio, electric flashlight and other small electric appliances. Even a few open-air dentistries were found in a few lanes. They still provided gold tooth

service that had disappeared in other parts of China.

#### **Romance of Makye Ame**

Heading in the direction of the Barkor kora from the crowded open-air market, we arrived at Makye Ame Restaurant, the rendezvous site of the unusual Sixth Dalai Lama Tsangyang Gyatso (1683 – 1706) with his lover. The two-storey building, painted yellow, formed a sharp contrast with the surroundings.

I liked to sit at a corner of Makye Ame at dusk, looking at the flow of non-stop pilgrims. The warm sunshine was cast on me from outside the window. I did nothing but sipped the sweet tea. I gazed at the people in the street quietly. I was not lost this time.

#### Sensuous Barkor Street

Buskers upstaged their shows in the lanes of Barkor Street. Most of them were Tibetan pilgrims who wanted to get some travelling expense for the home journey. Some others were monk pilgrims. Their performances included chanting scripture and praying for well being for others, telling Buddhist anecdotes with some old thangka, and striking Buddhist ritual devices and chanting scriptures.

To our surprise, transvestite show - yes, the kind of cross-dressing show — was performed at the gate of Guangming Tea House in Zangyi Road at about 7 p.m. After squeezing through the crowd, we saw a 'girl' dancing. She looked like a man from the Sub-continent (Nepal perhaps), with a noticeable flat and big nose. When she was dancing, she was more enchanting and softer than a real woman.

Sometimes minstrel poets from remote Tibetan areas were reciting the famous epic King Gesar. They were usually illiterate. After recovering from a serious sickness or gaining the god-given power from a dream, they could recite the epic of 100,000 to 200,000 words. During the performance, they wore the outfit of a monk and a hat, resembling a person in



heads, saying they did not understand either. I realized that Tibetans from different parts had communication problems too.

Apart from the street busking, the most popular recreation was open-air snooker and tea house movie show. Snooker players, kids aged 4 or 5, silveryhaired old men and monks in cassock alike, were seen everywhere in the lanes of Barkor Street. When there was a matchup of any kind, the two would strike the cue in the lane. Watching a Hong Kong cop-andgangster movie in a tea house was also a standard choice in Barkor Street.

That was Barkor Street - a boisterous block known for both sanctity and secularity. It was the historical miniature of the city, a symbol of the soul of the town. The labyrinthian lanes, old resident buildings, noisy tea houses, passers-by of different kinds... all were the unique components of Barkor Street. It was a paradoxical existence.

- 1. More and more Muslims gather in Barkor Street, Their dietetic habits enhance the diversity and prosperity of Barkor Street. This is a workshop
- 2. Hong Kong kungfu movies attract a lot of kids passing by the tea house. They squeeze their heads on the window panes to have a glimpse. (by Stephen Or)
- 3. There are many fruit stalls in the lanes. Nectarine from Sichuan is sold at only one yuan something for a half a kilo. (by Ma Yiu Chun)
- 4. Without a baby-sitter, the stall owner has to carry the baby while taking care of the stall business, (by Ma Yiu Chun)
- 5. Most of the buskers in Barkor Street were Tibetan pilgrims. The ahee businessmen have forgotten how their ancestors had migrated into Barkor Street. (by Ma Yiu Chun)





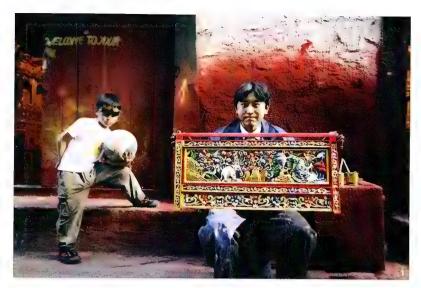


#### **Shopping in Barkor Street**

There were over 120 handicraft shops and 300 hawker stalls in Barkor Street. Many tourists were lost in the dazzling variety of goods in Barkor Street. What were the most commemorative souvenirs? Where could we buy authentic goods? Where could we buy without being cheated?

#### Must-buy's in Barkor Street

The goods sold in Barkor Street can be divided into two types, ethnic handicraft (e.g., ghee pot, knife, headwear, hand accessory, chest plate, waist buckle, steel for flint and wallet) and Tibetan daily utensils (mat, pulu, blanket, saddle mat, apron, traditional Tibetan boot zonpa, Tibetan hat, silver-lined wood bowl, carved silver tea set, tea



table, and embroidered tent). The following items are typical Tibetan souvenirs.

Translated by Zhang Boli

1. A traditional handicraftsman in Barkor Street is introducing his masterpieces to tourists. (by Chen Hoiwen)

#### **Tibetan Knife**

Someone will often ask you to buy Tibetan knife in Barkor Street. In fact, real Tibetan knives are few in Barkor Street. Most of them are 'decoration knife' processed by machinery. The best place to buy real Tibetan knife is a village in Lhaze, 50 to 60 km away from Xigazê. The whole village know to make Tibetan knife. Every process is hand-made. Sold at 50 ~ 200 yuan, the knives reveal an ancient simplicity. Note: If you travel by air, a Tibetan knife cannot be taken on board. Mail it home in the post office.

#### Thanaka

The thangka sold in Barkor Street is of a few types, painted thangka, printed thangka and thangka with printed outline and hand-painted details. The price of the painted thangka is high. The price for this category varies with different pigments. The cheapest one costs a few hundred yuan. A printed thangka is usually priced 20 yuan, depending on the size and printing quality. The half-printed half-painted thangkas cost a few dozens of yuan. Do differentiate the pure painted thangka and the half-printed half-painted thangka. Their prices vary hugely. Do not believe in the talk of an ancient thangka. Few such thangka survived now. Those that were claimed to be old thangka are imitative ones or thangkas made old with potassium permanganate.

#### **Turquoise**

Turquoise is usually sold at the unit of gram (5 to 8 yuan per gram). In Barkor Street, the turquoise strings are mostly fakes. If the seller says that it is produced in Lhoka, it is certain he is fooling you. Only crystal is produced in Lhoka. Most of the turquoise is produced in Hubei Province. As it is an item of medication and has a high religious value for Tibetans, it sells well in Tibet.

#### dZi Bead

dZi (pronounced Zee) bead, or 'heavenly bead' in

Chinese, is a patterned agate bead of mainly cylindrical or tabular shape. It is presented to monasteries or worshipped at home by Tibetans as precious protection amulet. An old three-eye dZi bead costs at least 3,000 yuan, and a nine-eye dZi bead is priceless. Judging by the prices offered by cultural relic shop proprietors, you will know that the 'old' dZi beads sold in Barkor Street are 100% fakes. A string of dZi beads on a sidewalk stall is sold on a wholesale basis in the ethnic department stores at 0.5 to 1.5 yuan. It is offered at 10 to 20 yuan in Barkor Street. The so-called 'new' dZi beads are processed in Guangzhou, while the 'old' dZi beads are processed in Taiwan.

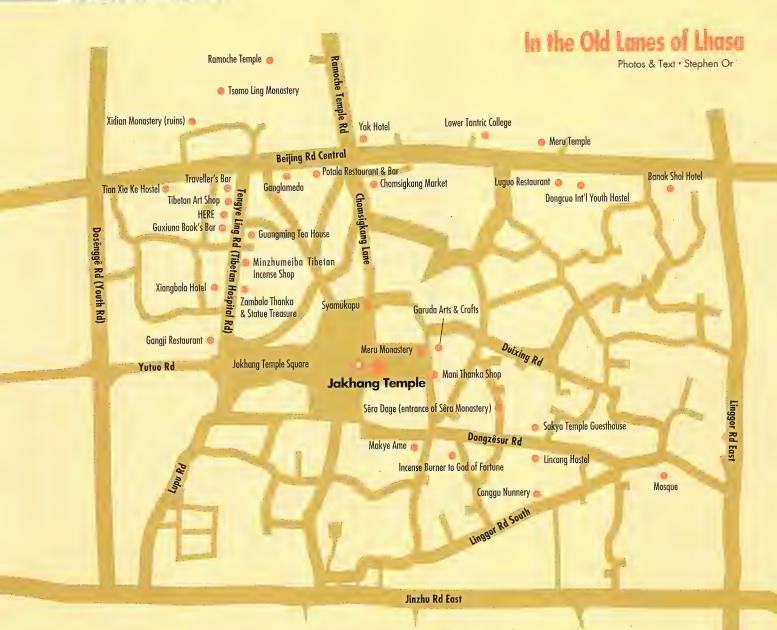
#### **Tibetan Accessories**

The bracelets and necklaces that are claimed to be pure silver are mostly impure silver. To be exact, it is made of cupronickel, an alloy of copper that contains 10 to 30 percent nickel. Long-time wearing such accessories will cause skin allergy. You can buy real pure silver accessories in large accessories shops at the prices of 200 ~ 300 yuan. The quality is guaranteed.

#### Cordycepin (a valuable herb)

After the operation of the railway, the non-stop influx of tourists drove up the price of cordycepin to 20,000 yuan per half a kilo. For that price, the quality is not first-rate. The cordycepin produced in Nagqu and Nyingchi are known to be the best. However, if you are not an expert of this valuable herb, it is recommended not to buy it in Lhasa. Most of them sold in Lhasa are fake. Some had been 'steamed', which means the essence has been extracted. Such steamed cordycepin without medical efficacy can hardly be identified from the appearance. To buy authentic cordycepin, you can go to the shop of Tibetan Pharmaceutics Factory of Tibet Autonomous Region in Barkor Street. The price there has been approved by the state, but is 'sky-high'.

#### 13241111251(0):46



#### **Makye Ame**

Located at the southeastern entrance of Barkor Street, Makye Ame is said to the rendezvous site of the Six Dalai Lama and his lover. Now it is bar & restaurant Tibetan style.



### KES IAUTAN

Located at the centre of Barkor Street, Jokhang Temple was initially built in 647 and dedicated to the Tang Princess Wen Chen by Tibeton King Srongsten Gampo whom she was married. The whole temple was constructed with reference to the Mandala in Tibetan Buddhism. The statue of Buddha Sakyamuni of the same size as his real person at the age of twelve is worshipped in the temple.



#### **Tsomo Ling Monastery**

Tsomo Ling Monastery is referred to as one of the four famous 'ling' monasteries of a small scale (together with Tengye Ling, Kunde Ling and Tsechok Ling). Located near Ramoche Temple, it is also called Upper Tantric College. It is a unique monastery where Buddhist rituals are often held.



#### Jokhang Temple Meru Monastery

Located in compound No. 10, Barkor Street North, it was the former site of Meru Monastery. Now it is the lodging place for most of the Tibetan pilgrims to Lhasa. It reflects a rich ethnic character.



#### Chongsaikana (Trom Si Khang)

It is the farmer's market in the old town of Lhasa. With a wide array of goods, it is perhaps the best place to retrieve the past of Lhasa.





#### Canggu Nunnery

It is the only nunnery in Barkor Street. The nuns open tea house, clinic and shops to provide means of livelihood. Here tourists can have a glimpse at the daily life of Tibetan Buddhist nuns.



#### Meru Monastery (Lower Tantric College)

One of the four major scripture printing monasteries in Tibet proper, Meru Monastery adopts the ancient block carving printing technology. The scripture printing section is closed to tourists, but the religious worshipping section is ореп.

#### Ramoche Temple

Located about 300 metres in the north of Barkor Street, Ramoche Temple is the place where the statue of Buddha Sakyamuni of the same size as his real person at the age of twelve is worshipped. The statue was brought along Princess Wen Chen into Tibet. Later, the statue swapped worshipping place with the statue of Sakyamuni at the age of eight brought into Tibet by Nepalese Princess who married Tibetan King Songsten Gampo too



#### Hebalin Mosque

Located at the intersection of Zisu Road East and Duixing Road, it is the largest mosque in Lhasa. A large Muslim population live around the mosque. Tourists can experience a very different culture in this Muslim enclave in a Tibetan Buddhism dominated region. Tourists can try a variety of Muslim snack food.



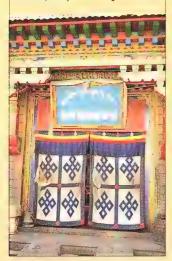


#### Lincang Hostel

Located near Zisu Road East, It the hostel Tibetan style revamped from Lhasa traditional residence. It is said to be the residence of the 14th Dalai Lama, The furniture was antique.

#### **Guangming (Brightness)** Tea House

It is the tea house of the longest history in Barkor Street. Each cup of sweet tea is priced 0.3 yuan, and each bowl of Tibetan noodles, 0.25 yuan Real bargains!





#### Incense Burner to God of **Fortune**

Located in the opposite of Makye Ame, it is the place whether the Tibetan businessmen in Barkor Street burn incense to God of Fortune.

#### Ganglamedo Cafe Bar

Of a rich Tibetan flavour, Ganglamedo Cafe Bar is located in Beijing Road Central, near Danjiesen Road. The restaurant presents a large collection of Tibefan oil paintings.





#### **Banak Shol Hotel**

A better-know backpackers hostel in Lhasa, with every bed only costs less than 30 yuan. Plus laundry service!

### Patrolling in famous Shops in Barkor Street

The souvenirs sold in Barkor Street could be bought in almost all tourist spots in the country, as they were dealt by wholesale from Zhejiang Province and some small commodities wholesale markets in the Pearl River Delta. However, it still has some century-old shops and fashionable boutiques. You can patrol Barkor Street to discover such shops and surprises.

# Mary Anne Acceptable Property Acceptable Property

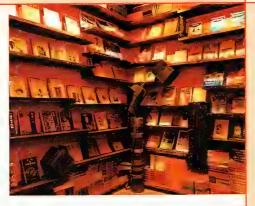
#### **Makye Ame**

Located in the southeast corner of Barkor Street, Makye Ame is painted yellow on the outer walls and looks rather personalized. It is stylish and elegant. It serves chiefly Tibetan and Nepalese cuisines.

Recommendation: Lhasa sweet tea and curry rice Nepalese style
Address: Southeast comer of Barkor Street, Lhasa, Tibet. Tel: (891) 632 4455

#### Guxiuna Book's Bar

Guxiuna, meaning religious practitioner in Tibetan, is a book store dedicated to books about Tibet. It offers



the latest books of Tibetology, hand-drawn map, postcard, and souvenirs to commensurate a trip to Tibet. Located in Beijing Road Central, you can stay there for the whole day by spending 10 yuan for something, reading all sorts of books about Tibet. The proprietor of the book store can share travel information with you. It is a good place for new comers to find data and partners.

Recommendation: *Hui Yan Zhao Xue Yu* (Sharp Eyes on the Snow Land) by Demu Wangjiu Duoji (in pinyin), and *Tu Shuo Xi Zang Gu Jin* (Tibet: Past and Present - An Illustrated Version) by Chen Zhonglie Address: Xiangbala Hotel near Danjielin Road Tel: 13908908926 (mobile)

#### Syamukapu

A famous shop of over 100 years old, Syamukapu was established by a Nepalese named Basuranna (in pinyin). Syamukapu means 'white hat'. At the beginning local Tibetans saw the proprietor wear a white hat all the times. They called him and his shop 'Syamukapu'. At its prime time, they dragged the first car of Tibet from the Himalaya Pass from Nepal. Now the shop deals with Nepalese Buddhist statues, masks and accessories.

#### Recommendation: Nepalese accessories

Address: No. 15, Barkor Street North, Lhasa, Tibet. Tel: (891) 633 6518





#### HERE

A boutique run by a woman from North China, HERE is specialised in Nepal and Indian clothes. accessories and souvenirs. The clothes were purchased by the proprietress from Nepal. Some of them were one of a kind. The proprietress provided professional image consulting service to the customers who bought clothes in her shop.

Recommendation: Clothes Nepalese style and postcards Address: Near Guxiuna Book Store, Danjielin Road, Lhasa, Tibet.





#### **Tibet Art Shop**

Tibet Art Shop, or literally 'Waiter's Shop' in Chinese, is a Tibetan souvenir shop run by a couple who have been in Lhasa for 10 years. It deals with ethnic accessories designed by the couple, Gurkha khukuris, Indian tapestry, etc. You can also design or mix and match your own creative accessories.

The couple love Tibet and the Tibetan culture. They transform all love for Tibet into a small shop. In addition to buying, chatting with them is a gain.

Recommendation: Tibetan accessories designed by the couple

Address: Near Shangri-la Hotel in Danjielin Road.





#### Minzhumeiba Tibetan Incense Shop

Minzhumeiba is specialized in traditional incense. All incense items on shelf are produced according to the



formulas in the Tibetan incense books related to Mindroling Monastery and other folk formulas. Unlike other Tibetan incense made of only a few ingredients in the market, the Tibetan incense of Minzhumeiba is made of sandalwood, saffron, clove and other rare Tibetan herbs. It is purely natural and good for the body. In addition to Tibetan incense, the shop sells Tibetan

incense pouch, Tibetan perfume and other characteristic Tibetan traditional souvenirs.

Recommendation: Tibetan scent pouch, perfume, special Tibetan incense box and books about Tibetan incense (published exclusively by the manufacturer)

Address: No. 8, Danjielin Road, Lhasa, Tibet. (in the opposite of Tibet Art Shop) Tel: (891) 686 8583



#### Garuda Arts & Craft

It is an old shop in Barkor Street that boasts a long history. It is specialised in handicraft, jewellery, accessories and silverware from India, Nepal and Tibet. The goods, chiefly



imported from Nepal or India, can follow the trend and are of a large variety. Most importantly, the price is attractive.

Recommendation: Silver pendant in the shape of prayer wheel
Address: No. 34, Gazhang Compound, Barkor Street East.
Tel: (891) 633 0036

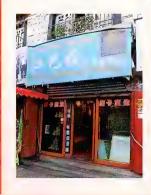
#### Zambala Thanka & Statue Treasure

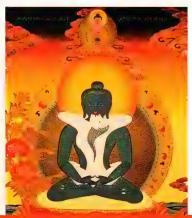
Unlike the thangka shops in Barkor Street that present demonstration of thangka making, this shop deals by wholesale with hand-made thangka from Nepal. It does not have thangka making on the site. A large tea table is placed inside the shop for business negotiation. The owner told us that a piece of thangka was finished at least for one or two months. In some cases, it was painted in half a year. Most of the 'show presenting' thangka shops purchased in bulk from them. The shop retails thangka at a slightly higher price than wholesale price. They can offer free dedication ceremony for the thangka bought by customers.

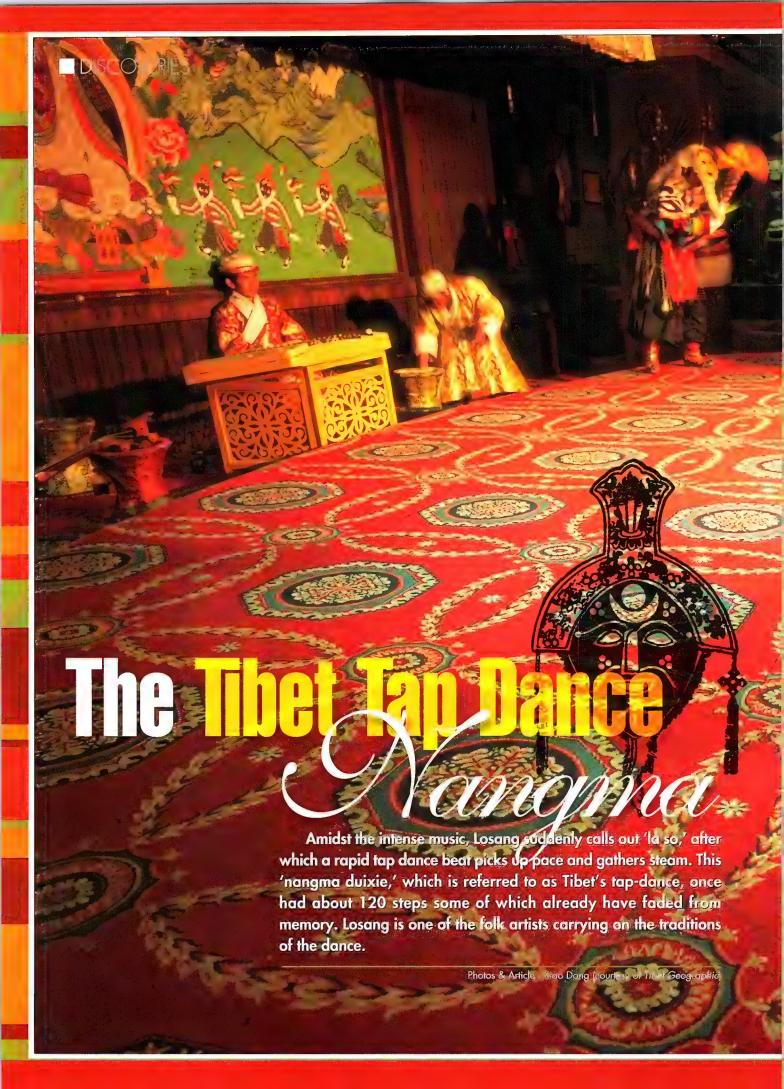
Recommendation: A piece of A4-sized thangka is sold at 100 something.

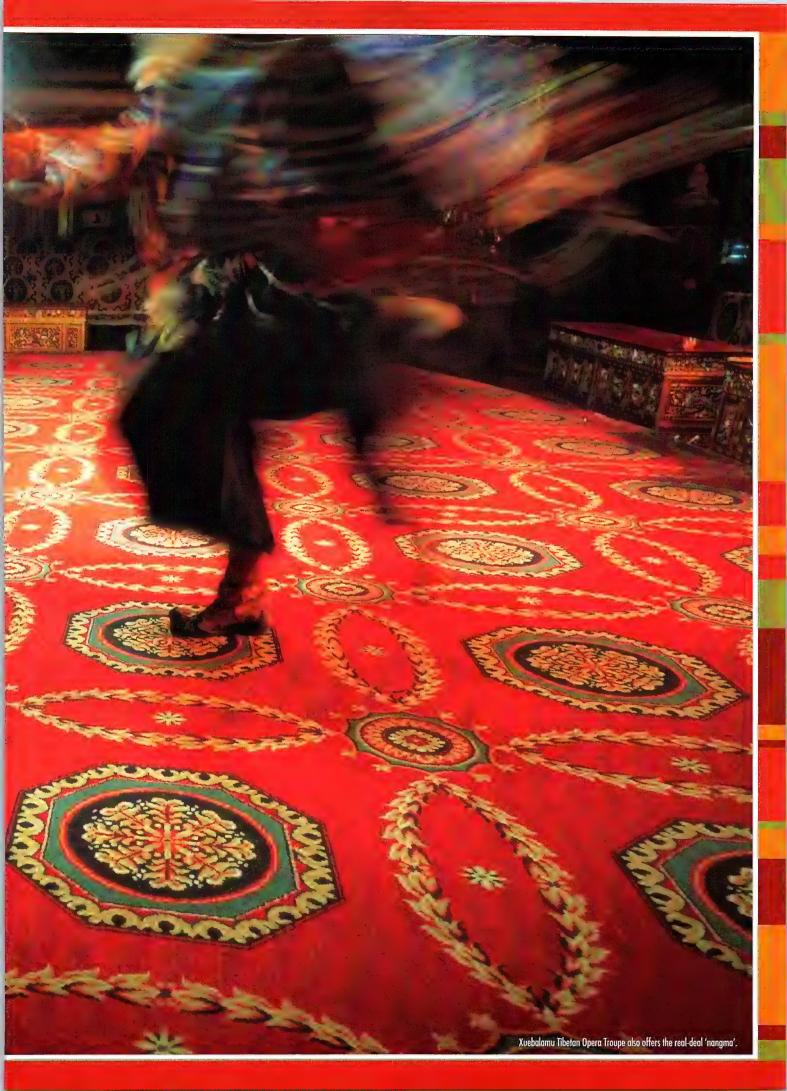
Address: No. 6, Danjielin Road, Lhasa, Tibet.

Tel: (891) 632 7728









#### DISCOVERIES





#### What is 'nangma'?

There are many interpretations of the word 'nangma.' Some academics translate it as 'palace song and dance' while others prefer 'classical song and dance'. In the past, the art flourished in places like Lhasa, Xigaze, Gyantze. The earliest 'nangma' was only found in palaces and the upper echelons of society, but it gradually made its way to a wider audience in Lhasa and surrounding areas. Performances featuring local artists quickly gained popularity among ordinary people.

Of all the theories on the origins of the 'nangma', one is perhaps best substantiated. In the 17th century, the time of the 5th Dolai Lama, an official named Sangye Gyaltso gathered together many folk musicians and dancers from the far western region of Ali and organized in Lhasa what would become known as 'nangma' performances. The original 'nangma' was

relatively simple consisting of only music with no dancing and no instrumental accompaniments, but it later grew into a much richer form and became popular with Lhaso's upper class.

Near the end of the 18th century, Nepal invaded Tibet. The Tibetan military commander, General Daring Tenzing Paljor, was labelled a traitor by the Qing government following this defeat by the Nepalese army and was ordered to the interior Chinese provinces for several years of interrogation and debriefing. Doring Tenzing Paljor happened to be a great fan of music and dance so while in inland China, he developed an interest in all forms of popular music and theatre there. This interest led him to study instruments like the yangqin (a Chinese hammered dukimer) and the sheng (a reed instrument). Later, when illness required that he return to Tibet, Doring Tenzing Paljor brought back with him the yangqin, jinghu (a boby version of the erhu for Beijing opera), erhu (a two stringed Chinese violin) and flute. To create a fuller sound these were added to the existing 'nangma' instruments that then only included the bamboo flute, the Dramnyen lute and stringed bells. It is said that Doring Tenzing Paljor himself later wrote many 'nangma' compositions and initiated the musical band's development of the 'nangma duixie' form.

In the latter half of the 19th century at the behest of thasa's Tibetan and Muslim music communities, 'nangma' became a big part of residents' lives. 'Nangma' musical structure typically is made up of several parts: (1) a mid-tempo introduction, (2) a slower chorus, and (3) an instrumental fast dance number. Up to about the 1950s musicions and music lovers formed groups called 'nangma jidu', which took music into the Barkor area. These 'nangma' artists tweaked and experimented with the 'nangma duixie' music and dance steps in order to create ever more thrilling live performances. At the time a fast dance section was added to the 'duixie' and stringed bells started to be used by the accompanying band.

f all things, I met Losang thanks to barley wine. Deep within the famous Barkor district, Losang's wife runs a small brewery and wine shop. Her famed barley wine attracts wine buffs from near and far, including this writer. In 2005 before the Butter Lamp Festival (15th day of the first Tibetan month), I made my way here for my usual tipple. Finally meeting Losang, we had a good chat while sunning ourselves. It was only then that I discovered Losang was an exponent of the legendary folk art troupe, 'nangma jidu,' as well as the only heir to those 120 'nangma duixie' dance steps!

#### The Man who Knows 120 Tap Dance Steps

Losang tells me that he's retired now. However teachers from the Central Conservatory of Dance in Beijing bring students to Lhasa especially to learn Tibetan tap-dancing from him because he studied with an authentic 'nangma jidu' artist when he was young.

Although now in his 50s, Losang learned tap-dancing and the bamboo flute with one of Lhasa's best-known 'nangma jidu' performers while growing up. He then worked as a bricklayer and plasterer in inland China until he found a job with a construction company back in Lhasa. In those days people did not have much in the way of entertainment, so Losang's musical talents made him a popular person. Whether in inland China or Lhasa, everyone around him loved to hear his flute playing, watch his dancing and listen to his 'nangma' singing. After retirement he found an ally in Tibet University art teacher Gyalha who was also a keen fan of 'nangma duixie.' They both studied it with the 'nangma' artist Sholkhang.

Losang tells me somewhat proudly that there are

over 120 dance steps, some lost now in the annals of time, but he is one of the heirs to this long, proud tradition. Tap dancing continues to be practiced at Tibet University and is performed by some dance troupes, but no repertoire is as complete as that of Losang.

#### The Unicomed Mangina Dance Half

After Losang heard of my interest in the 'nangma,' we arranged to meet in the evening, at 10:30 p.m., on the second floor of Lhasa's Culture Bureau building. I arrived on time and found to my surprise that it was an unnamed 'nangma' hall. Business was quiet, with only one or two tables occupied. Losang was dressed in a neat silk Tibetan shirt and brown robe with a string of bells in his hand. He was about to perform on stage with four other people. He smiled at me and introduced the others as Phuntsog who would play the yanggin, Gyalha on the bamboo flute, Tashi Dorje on the Dramnyen lute and Drolma an apprentice who would be singing and dancing with him. As soon as the music started, I realized this was 'nangma duixie' at its most authentic.

The quintet led by Losang played different 'nangma duixie' tunes all night with only four or five breaks before 3:00a.m. the next morning. After every few songs, Losang would hand over the stringed bells to Drolma and walk off the small stage to either give back-up to the others or

- 1. The band of five performing at the unnamed 'nangma' hall on the second floor of the Culture Bureau building is today's 'nangma jidu.'
- 2. A youngster from Lhaze picks up his father's Dramnyen lute and starts playing.
- 3,4. There are more than 120 variations of the 'nangma duixie' dance.



#### DISCOVERIES





#### What is the 'duixie'?

A direct translation of 'dvixie' is 'music and dance from Dui.' Dui refers to upper regions of ancient Tibet, the vast area between Xigaze and Ali. Originating in the towns and villages of these areas, 'duixie' later spread to Lhasa via Lhatse and Xigaze. The format was cheerful and simple so it quickly became popular among Lhasa residents. During the evolution of 'duixie,' Lhasa performers never stopped writing and adapting new songs, adding accompanying music and expanding the original single Dramnyen lute accompaniment to a small orchestra also comprising a bamboo flute, the yangqin, tieqin, jinghu, and stringed bells.

The musical structure of "duixie" usually is fixed. Different songs are sung with similar music, but the songs have different slow and fast dance parts. To beginners it seems like the songs are similar, but this is true only for the start and finish. What is in the middle might take a thousand different forms.



to do a tap-dance on a small wooden plank. Sometimes Drolma would join in for a dance duet. Losang's steps are light and quick, lively and flowing. The passion with which he sings and dances often brings the audience to its feet dancing with him, click-clack tapping up a storm. Now this is what is called real tap-dancing!

#### Nunging Artists of Today

Over the next few days, I began to frequent the 'nangma' hall getting to know everyone. Tashi Dorje has a very well made Dramnyen lute. It is an instrument he has studied since he was a teenager. When he worked at the (former) Red Flag commune on the outskirts of Lhasa, he became a key player in its performance troupe. Gyalha is a professor in the Arts Faculty of Tibet University teaching the Dramnyen lute and the bamboo flute. He studied under the great 'nangma' artist Sholkhang Sonam Dargye, learning a great deal of 'nangma duixie' music and dance from this 86 year old master.

The man who runs the unnamed 'nangma' hall is named Tsedu. A few years ago he was selling general merchandise along the Barkor but gave that up, found the group of five including Losang and opened up this 'nangma' dance hall in the Culture Bureau building. It has been open for a few months, but business has not picked up. There are dozens of nangma halls in Lhasa, big and small, but this is the only one that performs true, traditional 'nangma duixie' music and dance. Since this is the essence of traditional Tibetan performing art and dear to all their hearts, Gyalha says he will keep going no matter how tough things become.



#### Nangan of the Xuebalamu Tibetan Opera Troupe

Aside from the quintet with Losang, Gyalha and the others, the Xuebalamu Tibetan Opera Troupe is another group in Lhasa that is carrying on some of the 'nangma' and 'duixie' traditions.

Nima is 58 years old and works as a music instructor in the Xuebalamu troupe. His father Dawa Dhondup was a musician in the (Potala) Palace. Nima started learning tap-dance and the Dramnyen lute from his father when he was just seven or eight years old. Even now the family still possesses precious copies of 'nangma' music and lyrics.

In the interest of cultural preservation, Xuebalamu Tibetan Opera Troupe always adds to its Tibetan opera performances a bit of traditional 'nangma duixie' chosen by the troupe Director. Drolma, one of a few young girls who have just joined the troupe, is a graduate of Tibet University where she studied the yangqin in the Arts Faculty. Another is Tseyang from the No. 8 Middle School in Lhasa. She was a leading member in the school dance team before being sent to study in Chengdu. She later returned to Lhasa and took up work at the Tibet Postal Hotel as a typist, a job she quit after a few months to pursue her love of music performance and to become a

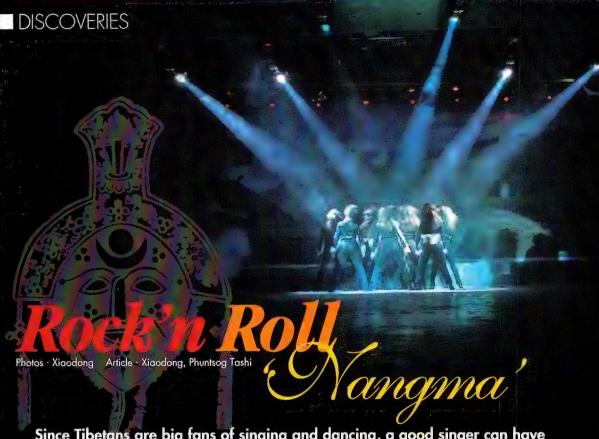
dancer in a 'nangma' hall. Ultimately she was hired by the Xuebalamu troupe enabling her to study and learn real 'nangma' and Tibetan opera.

Performances by the Xuebalamu Tibetan Opera Troupe start every evening at 7:30 p. m. in the Himalaya Hotel. Nowadays very few tourists or Lhasa locals know there are traditional Tibetan opera and 'nangma' performances here. Tickets cost 100 yuan each, and it is not unusual to see foreigners out-number locals. Instances where two dozen performers put on a show for a handful of viewers are not rare. Such is the common problem faced by all Tibetan traditional art forms today.

'As long as people come to watch, we even will perform for an audience of one. If we keep it up, one day we will attract increasingly bigger crowds to enjoy this most traditional Tibetan song and dance,' says Silun the troupe Director.

- Rinchin with her clear and pure voice is a highly popular performer at the Rongzhong Er Jia 'nangma' hall.
- 2. Today's 'nangma' halls are similar to entertainment centres, a mix of bar and dance hall. Some even have Karaoke.
- 3. Tibetan fashion show at the Rong Zhong Er Jia 'nangma' hall.
- 4. There is no shortage of pretty girls in the 'nangma' halls. Most are graduates of performance schools.
- 5. The lavish Tibetan costumes add visual interest to the shows.





Since Tibetans are big fans of singing and dancing, a good singer can have thousands of fans. 'Nangma' halls don't charge cover fees or any other costs, so the price of your drink will suffice for a night's entertainment.

y 9:30 p.m. patrons start arriving at the best known of Lhasa's score or more 'nangma' halls, the Rong Zhong Er Jia 'nangma' hall on Niangre North Road. Another famous one is on Deji Road and is called Tanggula Winds Nangma Hall.

#### Nanghio La Vogue

As soon as one sits down, the drink promoters come as if bees to honey, pushing their wares. I searched hard for the same sense of 'nangma duixie' I had experienced at the Culture Bureau building, but I found the pop beat here bewildering and conflicting. What impressed me most was a three-girl singing group. Later I discovered the lead singer's name to be Rinchin. The moment she hit the stage and started singing, her beautifully clear voice won cheers from the crowd. Many in the audience went so far as to present her with a 'hada,' the long white Tibetan scarf traditionally offered to show respect and appreciation.

Mid-afternoon is rehearsal time at the 'nangma' hall. On my second day I came to the rehearsals and found Rinchin Drolma sitting off-stage, her hair done up in multi-coloured braids that no one could miss even in a crowd. On stage, a song and dance group from Inner Mongolia and a few Tibetan dancers were taking turns practicing.

Rehearsals start at 3:30 p.m. sharp. The Rong Zhong Er Jia song and dance troupe's art director Dorje is directing a new dance number 'Lucky Wind and Clouds.' It is a Tibetan tap-dance adaptation with many modern elements. Dorje has been hard at it for days because the young performers never seem to get certain things right. He has to walk on stage and correct their postures and positions one by one. Everyone however is working hard, huffing, puffing and perspiring.

In Lhasa most young performers of the 'nangma' halls come from Tibetan nationality autonomous prefectures in Sichuan, Yunnan and Qinghai provinces. Many already have received basic professional training and speak fluent Mandarin. Gesang Danzeng and Wang Zhisong are young men from Aba Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Sichuan. They have had to pass several tests to earn their positions at the best nangma hall in town. Judging by their earnest rehearsal efforts and singing practices, these are jobs they clearly treasure.

After rehearsals, Rinchin introduced me to her other group members, Tseyang Drolma and Lhatso Drolma. Of the three, Tseyang is 25 this year and a Lhasa native. Rinchin and Lhatso are younger and both from Hainan Tibetan autonomous prefecture in Qinghai Province. The three form the only singing group at the 'nangma' hall. They also dance, but mainly they sing popular Tibetan songs and a small number of their own original numbers. Like sisters, the three girls live in the same dormitory room. All sporting the same colourful braids, they normally perform until

- 'Nangma' hall dances are imbued with modern touches.
- 2. Professional music and lighting means 'nangma' halls can create different atmospheres.
- 3. The multi-braided Rinchin is a fashionable version of the 'nangma'

2:00 or 3:00 a.m. and then start again rehearing with the troupe later the same afternoon.

More than a year ago, the trio arrived at the Rong Zhong Er Jia Nangma Hall with still rather weak singing skills. The artistic directors then arranged for them to study singing with teachers from the autonomous region's Tibetan opera troupe. After about nine months of hard work, their singing began to gain increasing recognition to the point of attracting backers who put out a CD for them.

#### Rock'n Roll (Nangma'

Performances at Lhasa's 'nangma' halls usually start around 10 o'clock at night. With all sorts of people in the audience, the shows run on until the early hours of the morning. There are song and dance numbers, comic skits and a show of Tibetan costumes. The Tibetan fashion show, where all the performers appear onstage, is a big hit with the audience. During set breaks there are also a few dances in which audience members can join. This naturally gets the crowd excited, and the atmosphere soon becomes boisterous.

being performed at the 'nangma' hall, all seem clearly adapted to contemporary tastes; hardly any traditional material is in evidence. Aside from special performances and the odd customer who dances and sings 'nangma duixie', many young people have no idea what it really entails despite the name 'nangma' being used. In some 'nangma' halls one can sing pop songs and do ballroom dancing.

With over a dozen 'nangma duixie' numbers

'Nangma' halls such as these form the mainstay of nightlife in Lhasa. For locals and tourists, some have even added souvenir shops.

If a customer likes a certain performer, he or she can buy a 'hada' scarf from the waitress to present to that performer. The most

performer. The most popular performer inevitably ends up with a big pile of hada scarves. At 5 yuan per scarf, it's a nice earner for the hall operators who also give the performers a cut. It is a little like the theatregoers of interior Chinese provinces who light firecrackers and give red banners in honour of their favourite actors and



performers. The 'nangma' hall that has the most popular talent does a roaring trade, so not unexpectedly there is much competition for good performers. Some performers have to work at more than one venue each night. They finish their singing at one place, then get in a cab and hurry to the next 'nangma' hall.

With this fierce competition for new talent and content, 'nangma' halls now have become a fertile training ground for many singers and performers some of whom previously were ordinary street buskers.

#### Faster Fundancing...

During the interviews, I lived with the performers of the Rong Zhong Er Jia 'nangma' hall and tagged along to all their rehearsals and performances. These are young Tibetan men and women from many different Tibetan regions all highly dedicated to their craft. One day, a performer happened to ask me why I was with the troupe and interviewing them. I replied that it was because of my high regard for 'nangma.' They were a little confused by my reply, so I told them that 'nangma' is true classical Tibetan music and dance. They responded by saying that their performances also were authentic Tibetan music and dance. It then struck me that 'nangma' in its traditional sense, is a dying art, not just for me, but for the younger generation of Tibetans as well.

# The Toys and Powous Article Liao Dongton Performing Artists

The words 'nangma jidu' refer to groups of singers and dancers who share their joys and sorrows through song and dance. The fact that Losang studied tap-dancing with early 'nangma jidu' performers inspires a worthy interest in these music groups which were once Lhasa household names.

t is said that the earliest 'nangma jidu' groups were formed in the late 17th century on the orders of the ruling Disi (title of leader), Sangye Gyaltso. He issued a special charter for them governing members, performance content and source of income. Whenever official banquets or major celebrations such as the Linka Festival, Tibetan New Year, Sagadawa or the Shoton Festival take place, 'nangma jidu' members unconditionally had to agree to perform. At other times, Lhasa's aristocrats, wealthy merchants, large families or ordinary groups of city folk also might invite 'nangma jidu' groups to perform for special occasions, picnics and parties.

'Nangma jidu' groups are led by a master of music and dance. Every year two officers are chosen to organize, liaise and manage them. In the early years, groups just sang 'nangmas.' Later when 'duixie' reached Lhasa, it was re-worked by the 'nangma jidu' performers and added to their repertoire. 'Nangma jidu' musicians all are famous Tibetan, Muslim or Han instrumentalists while singing and dancing are done by young girls. In addition to the Dramnyen lute, there also must be a yangqin, flute, erhu, jinghu, and bells. Only these seven instruments can form a genuine 'duixie nangma' musical group.

#### The Legendary Ajue Langije

Of all the famous 'nangma' artists in this music's long history, blind musician Ajue



is possibly the most legendary.

Sometime about 1894, Langjie was born to a poor peasant family near the Lengda ferry crossing in Gyaca County (Shannan District). His parents had to work for the estate lord everyday, so he would be locked up at home where he was able to crawl around the yard on his own. When he was two years old, a big hungry raven suddenly swooped down and picked out his two eyes. From then on, Langjie's world became permanently dark, and he

Langjie's world became permanently dark, and he grew up experiencing considerable hardship and suffering.

As well as being a hard-working farmer and a transport levy worker, Langjie's father also happened to be a good player of the Dramnyen lute. The old man was determined to teach his musical skills to his son so Langjie would have a way to make a living. Later after Langjie's parents both passed away, he became a lone fixture busking at the Lengda ferry crossing of the Yarlung Zangbo River. Langjie was an extremely clever man. While his eyes could not see the colours of the landscape, his heart was filled with beautiful melodies. He could play not only local music, but he also learned music and dance from other, nearby parts of Tibet. No matter what the song was, as soon as it came out of a singer's mouth, he was able to play it on his Dramnyen lute.

#### Wanderer — From Gyatsa to Lhasa

Sholkhang Sonam Dargye, a professor of music at Tibet University, studied with the blind Langjie when he was 13 years old. He is well acquainted with Langjie's life story and related that around 1914, the 13th Dalai Lama was carrying out reforms and wanted to develop mining in Tibet. The Kashag (Cabinet of the Lhasa Government) sent Kalon (Cabinet Minister) Tsarong Dazang Damdu and Kashag Secretary Sholkhang Dhondup Dorje (Sholkhang Sonam Dargye's father) to check out mining resources in the Gyaca region. They saw

the 20-year old Langjie playing the lute beautifully as they passed the Lengda ferry crossing. Tsarong and Sholkhang both also happened to be experts in the field of Tibetan music and dance, so they said to the young man: 'You're a gifted musician, but it's a shame your talents are buried in this remote town. Go to Lhasa where your skills can develop!'

So indeed Langjie went to Lhasa, busking on the streets during the day and sleeping outdoors or beside temples and noblemen's homes at night. At the time, 'nangma' and 'duixie' were the favourite music of Lhasa residents. Langjie however could only play tunes from his hometown as well as some folk songs from Gongbu and Kham to the east. Naturally he received little attention in Lhasa.

During Ajue Langjie's toughest time, the official who discovered him at the Lengda ferry crossing, Sholkhang Dhondup Dorje, gave him a helping hand. Sholkhang introduced him to the then masters of 'nangma jidu,' Adu Rema and Wangjie who guided him in the study 'duixie' and 'nangma' songs and melodies.

Within a few years Langjie's extraordinary musical abilities coupled with his diligent commitment to study made him the master of many 'duixie' and 'nangma' tunes. He also learned to play instruments like the yangqin, flute and erhu. Many people praised the fact that his 10 fingers surely were blessed by the gods. Although the doors of 'nangma jidu' had opened to him almost by accident, Langjie was not complacent in the face of his achievements. He sought more teaching from the Muslim artist Ayiwuli and the Han artist Master Tan, soaking up all sorts of musical knowledge, especially 'gongchi,' a form of notation used in writing musical scores.

#### The 'Nangma Duixie' Wave

Known in those days as a city of festivals, summertime Lhasa saw monks, aristocrats, merchants, craftsmen and everyday people all crowd into the blissfully shaded *linkas* (gardens and parks) for song and dance, drinking and relaxing. In winter, all the

upper class families were in the habit of entertaining. This is why 'nangma jidu' artists were welcome all year around.

As people like Adu Rema and Wangjie passed from the scene, Langjie emerged and was chosen as the doyen of 'nangma jidu.' This period with Langjie sitting at the apex of 'nangma jidu' was probably the golden age for the 'duixie' and 'nangma' artforms in Lhasa.

Whether it was noblemen and officials sending their horses and an invitation or ordinary people just dropping by to invite him out, Langjie never turned down anyone. Hence his fame grew, and the people of Lhasa began calling him 'big brother Langjie.' Later he married a girl named Tsering who helped stabilize his family life and allowed him more time and energy to devote to music.

During Lhasa's Shoton Festival that takes place every seventh month on the Tibetan lunar calendar, 12 Tibetan opera and folk music troupes would gather at the Norbulinka, the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas, to put on performances for everyone. The Jinba Tibetan Opera Troupe from western Tibet and Lhatse (near Xigaze) brought new, original 'duixie' tunes every year giving the Lhasa fans a treat for their ears and tapping feet. As head of 'nangma jidu,' Ajue Langjie took advantage of these hard to come by learning opportunities. He always brought along musicians and songstresses to the Jinba troupe's shows, listening and carefully writing down the music with 'gongchi' notation so it could be performed later for a wider Lhasa audience.

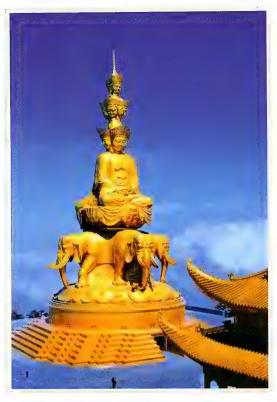
As Ajue Langjie's reputation spread far and wide, those coming to study with him crowded his doorway. He rented two large rooms along the Raosai alley in the Barkor area and set up Lhasa's first music school. So it was that Langjie's music school produced a huge number of musically talented people. From the 1930s to the 1950s, most musicians in Lhasa benefited one way or another from Ajue Langjie's tutelage and influence.

Translated by Cheng Lei

- 1. Blind musician Ajue Langjie founded Lhasa's first music school.
- 2. Performers doing the 'duixie' tapdance on Lhasa streets in 1961. (by Chen Zonglie)
- 3. In the 60s, old Nangma Jidu artists teaching youngsters classical songs. (by Chen Zonglie)
- 4. On a day near the end of 2005 we met this old lady along the Barkor whose delicate 'duīxie' steps were a sight to behold. (by Xiao Tao)







## Mt Emel

Magnificent Scenery and Culture

Edited by Kristy Wong

Since ancient times, the splendid landscape and culture of Mt Emei have captivated tourists from home and abroad as well as many renowned Chinese literati. Li Bai (701-762), a poet of the Tang dynasty (618—907), wrote in his poems that among all the many mountains in the State of Shu (old name for Sichuan Province), Mt Emei was incomparable. Twentiethcentury writer Guo Moruo (1892—1978) also devoted much of his talent to Emei, praising the mountain as the 'World's Number One Mountain'.







#### Double World Heritage Site

Listed as a 'World Cultural and Natural Heritage Site', Mt Emei is located in Emei Shan City in western China's Sichuan Province. The Golden Summit (linding) is the main peak of Mt Emei, which stands 3,099 metres high above sea level. No visitor to Emei should miss the four wonders of the mountain — sunrise, the sea of clouds, the Buddhist halo and the holy lamp.

With its unique natural and cultural environment, Mt Emei enjoys many accolades — the 'kingdom of vegetation', the 'playground of animals', the 'museum of geology' and the 'paradise of the Buddha kingdom'. Emei has also been dubbed 'the most graceful and elegant mountain under heaven'.

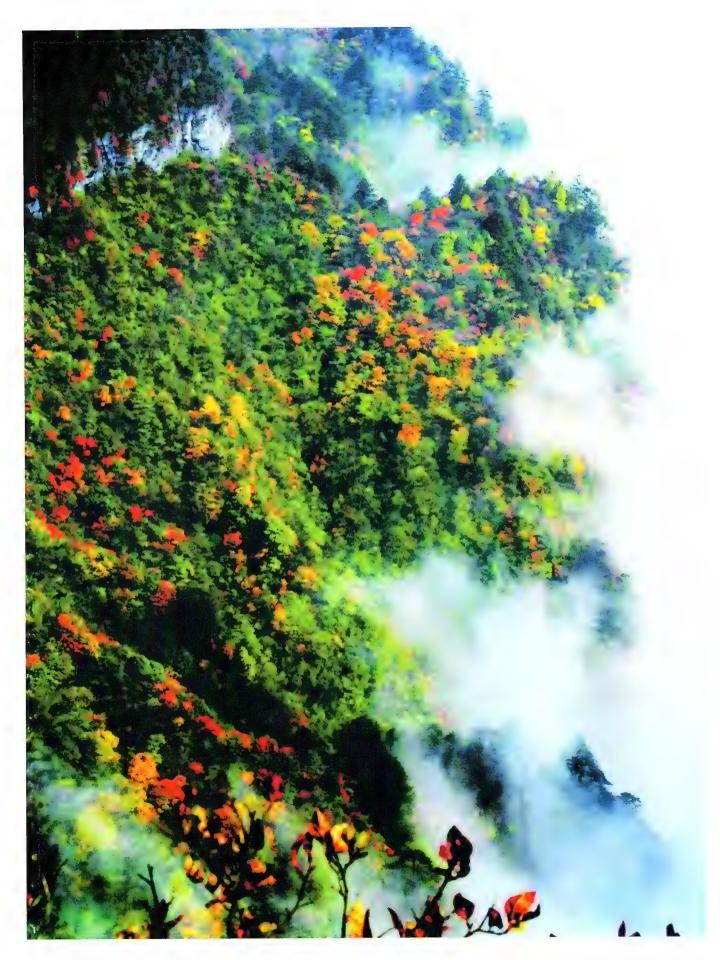
Mt Emei rises high from the fields with its beautiful natural landscape rich with a myriad of animals and vegetation, unique geological features and landforms. From the foot of the mountain to its peak, the local people describe 'four seasons in a day and different heavens in five kilometres'.



#### 'Top's of Mt Emei

- The only area lying on the same latitude that owns the best-preserved vegetation in the world;
- The only tourist area located in West China or the upper reaches of the Yangtze River which boasts the title of double World Heritage (Natural and Cultural) Site, as well as being voted as a world's excellent ecotour area;
- A rendezvous of China's Conflucionism, Toolsm, martial arts culture and minority customs, plus Buddhism and tea culture brought from foreign places;
- Six wonders on the mountain: Buddha's halo, sunrise, sea of cloud, sacred lights, the Golden Summit and Golden Temple:
- China's largest base of hot spring resorts;

- The world's tallest statue of Samantabhadra located on the Golden Summit.
- 2. The Ten Thousand Buddhas Summit.
- 3. Monkeys in the Monkeys Nature Reserve.
- 4. Leaf butterfly, a rare species found in Mt Emei.
- 5. The Clear Sound Pavilion is best to enjoy the wonderful natural environment.



#### Incomparable Natural Scenery

The middle level of Mt Emei is best for viewing the amazing natural scenery. There is always mist and lush green trees, with flowing waterfalls and spring water, birds singing a carpet of fragrant flowers and grasses. In winter and spring, visitors can see the ice flowers hanging on the trees and lose themselves in a silver-white world; in summer, there is a sea of azalea flowers among the ancient dove tree forests; in the fall, the leaves turn red, spreading all over the mountain, with the colourful forests rising ever higher. The natural beauty of Emei has also inspired many imaginative names for the mountain, such as 'mighty moon of the Washing Elephant Pool', 'house of nine old immortals' and 'clear voice of the double bridge'.



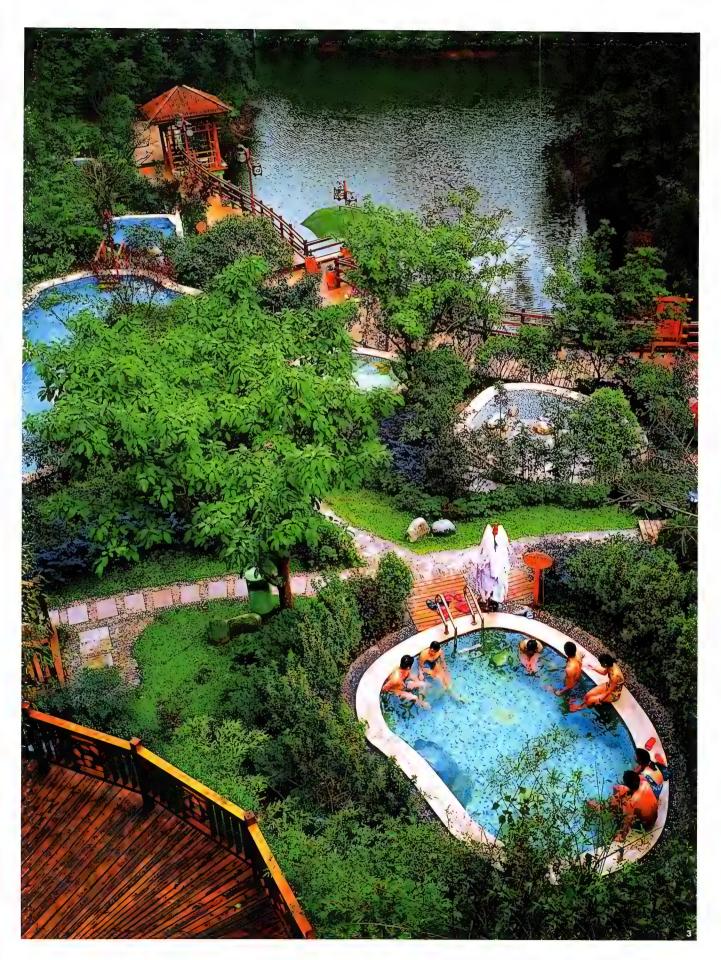
- 1. Captivating autumn scenery on the mountain.
- 2. Huazang Temple was built in the Eastern Han dynasty (25 220).
- 3. Grand Buddhist ceremonies are held annually on the mountain.

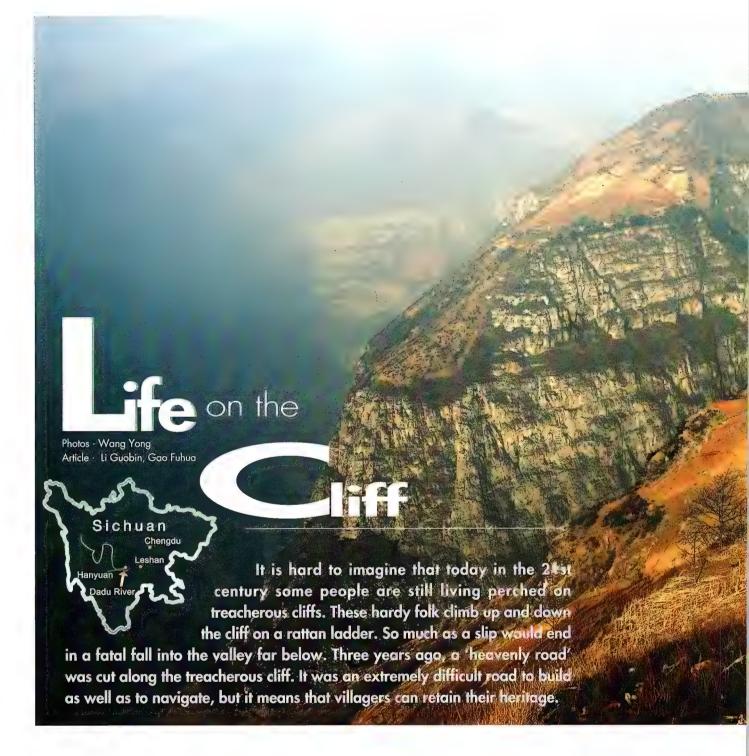
#### Scared Buddhist Land

It is more than 2,000 years since Buddhism came to Mt Emei — one of the four famous Buddhist mountains in China. There are over 30 ancient temples on the mountain and each was erected in a unique style. Visitors will hear the ubiquitous sound of bells and drums both morning and evening, and the chanting of Buddhist scripture lingers in the air, soothing the soul. An exquisite bronze statue of Samantabhadra (Puxian Bodhisattva) is housed in Wanlian (Ten Thousand Years) Temple. The figure is riding on an elephant which was moulded in the Northern Song dynasty. Its total weight is 62 tons and and it stands 7.85 metres high.





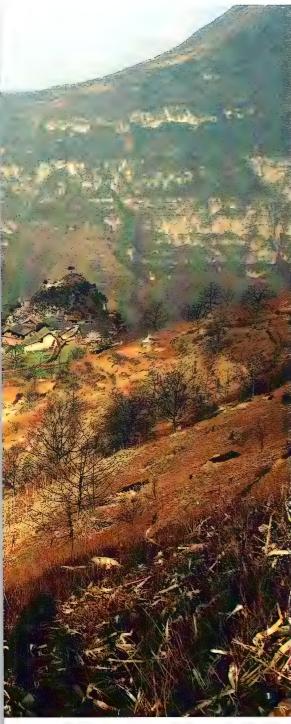




We walking on a 40-cm-wide Trail set off by car from Hanyuan County, Sichuan Province, and an hour later arrived at Yi Village in a valley of the Dadu River, a tributary of the upper reaches of the Yangtze River. We climbed upwards, sometimes using our hands, along a mountain trail. Going through a cave cut into the mountain rock, we reached the first platform on the cliff. Looking down, we were taken aback. Below us, a train, usually a long, snaking dragon, had turned into a tiny centipede. It was the Chengdu (Sichuan

Province)-Kunming (Yunnan Province) train, known for its passage through the perilous wilds of southwest China.

Looking up, we saw a zigzagging trail leading into the mist and clouds. Along the way, we met some Yi villagers who were heading down the mountain to go to the market. They were dressed neatly, wearing black scarfs on their heads. They talked and laughed, walking at an easy pace. 'This is the main road to Gulu (Ancient Road) Village. There're some families







hours. The faint rumble of the train passing by far below added to the evening tranquillity of Banjiuzui. The family was hospitable, insisting westay overnight in his house.

#### **Brides Said Farewell to Life Below**

Gulu villagers, according to Shen Guojin had only one way off the cliff down to the Dadu River. 'In fact that was not a road. In the steep parts we used rods to make a ladder. In places where a rod ladder was impossible, we used a rattan ladder. In the past, we tied rattan cut from the mountain — as thick as the handle of a hoe — to a tree stump and clawed our way down. Sometimes we had to carry dozens or even a 50kg of goods gathered from the mountains on our backs. We traded them for salt and cloth. We had to be very careful. If we slipped, it would mean certain death.'

While Shen's tone was casual, we were captivated by his frightening stories. It was said that the

- The Gulu villagers living on the steep cliff reach the outside world on a 40-cm-wide 'heavenly trail.' No wonder the women who are married to cliff dwellers never leave the mountain again.
- 2. This trail is called the 'main road' by the Gulu villagers.
- 3. A loaded horse trudges along the rocky trail.

up there on the platform,' they told us.

#### Walking On a 40-cm-wide Trail

We had to smile when the villagers referred to a 40-cm-wide trail as the 'main road.' But our smiles faded after just a few steps when dizziness and breathing difficulties set in. Finally we reached Laiziping platform, where four families lived, the first being the family of Shen Shaoqiang at Banjiuzui in Gulu Village. At that point we had walked for five



piglets in Gulu Village were brought down the hill while they were still small, because once they had grown, there was no option but to slaughter them on the mountain for consumption by the locals. No one could have carried a fat grown pig on his back down the mountain. A lone ox or stallion could not breed in his whole life as there was no cow or mare around. Brides from a remote place could not go back to their maternal home even once after their marriage. Even men had little chance of getting down the mountain. In the 1960s when the Chengdu-Kunming Railway was built, the engineering team came across the villagers who climbed up and down on the cliff like monkeys. They helped to weld some steel ladders onto the cliffface and so ended the chapter of the swinging rattan ladders for the Gulu villagers. In 2003, the local government provided funding, and local labour to cut a trail on the cliff. The trail of only a few dozen centimetres wide was referred to as the 'main road.' Some people called it the 'mule and horse road.' Rattan, ladder and main road make up the trilogy of accessibility for Gulu villagers.

1. This suspension bridge spans the Daduhe Valley. The Daduhe River runs along beneath.

2. The horse is the only form of transportation.

- 3. Gulu villagers close their doors when eating. Legend has it that a villager once had a piece of corn bread blown from his hand into the valley in a gale because he had left the door open.
- 4. The 'main road' has been built. A question, nevertheless, remains: what does the future hold for the Gulu villagers?

#### Primary School at the Edge of the Cliff

After of the Cliff saying goodbye to Shen Shaoqiang's family, we headed east to the village

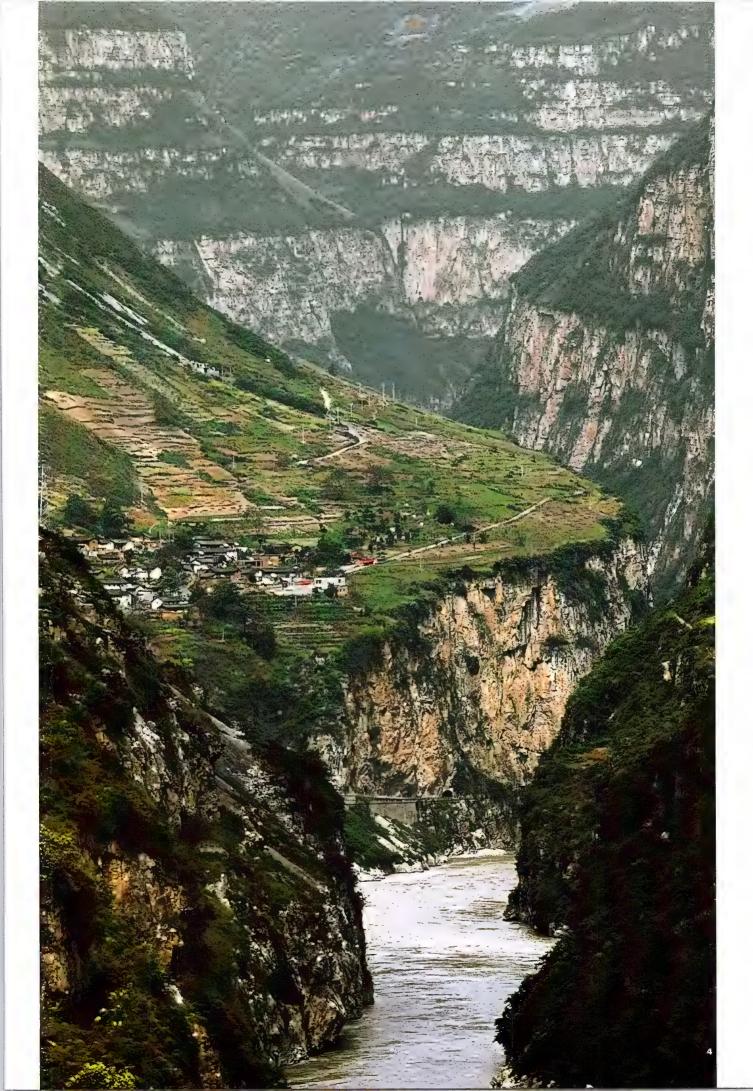
primary school and Gulu Cliff, the seat of the village committee. The road leading to the primary school was along the cliff. We met many pupils on their way to school. Almost without exception, they had an 'extra leg'— a stick in hand. Some held the tail of a horse ahead as they walked along.

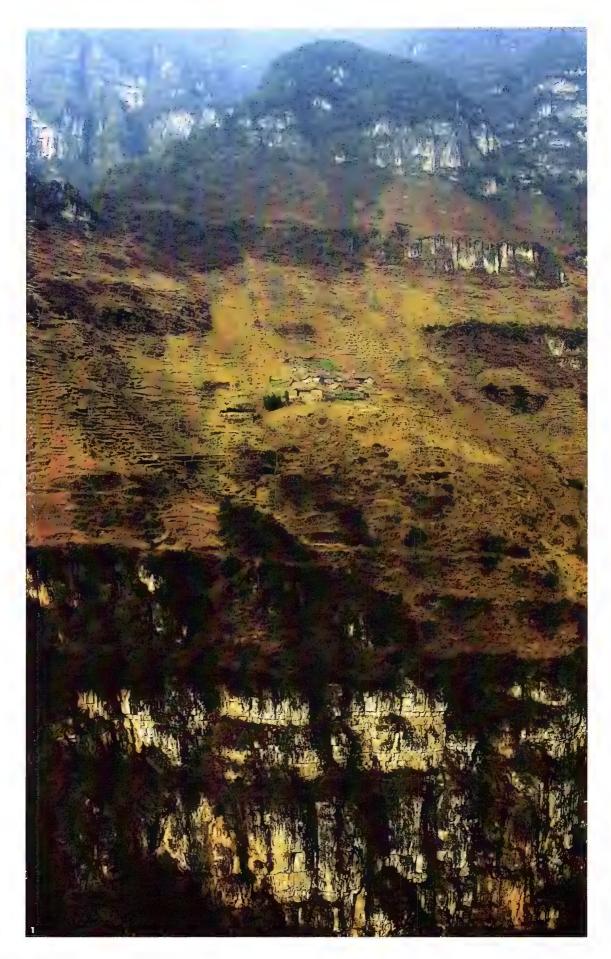
Gulu Primary School was the only brick-and-concrete construction in the village. The classrooms were surrounded by a wooden fence. A shabby black wooden door was tied to the fence, in sharp contrast to the concrete building. The school had 70 pupils in four classes. The only sports facilities were the basketball hoops. The whole basketball court was only a few dozen square metres. If the ball bounded off the mountain, it took half a day to get it back. So not surprisingly, the pupils did not usually play the game. After class, girls skipped and danced with rubber bands, while boys lay down on the ground to play a stone picking game.

Mr. Shen, aged 43, was the unofficial schoolmaster and a teacher. He had taught at the primary school for 25 years with a monthly salary of only 190 yuan. Living in Section 2 of Gulu Village, he had to walk for one hour from home to school along the cliff trail. He had not been offered a chance to become official teacher. However, he said that he would not leave the children even if he had to stay an unofficial teacher for his whole life. I asked the children, what was their biggest wish? Their answer was to 'get down and see the train', 'take a train' and 'drive a train.' The Chengdu-Kunming train went through the tunnels under the homes of the children. But while they saw the trains passing below, they never saw the passengers. Before the establishment of the mule and horse road, many women and old people who were afraid of the difficult descent had not even seen a train. So what is the future of the Gulu village children? Will it be the same as that of previous generations who started work at dawn and rested at dusk? Will it be a life of tending horses along the cliff? Or will it be a climb down the mountain to further education and employment in other places?









#### Let There Be Light

Gulu Village produces corn, beans, buckwheat and yarn. They also produce a small amount of walnuts and grow some trees that add to the villagers' economy. But the land around the village is barren and the average annual income per capita is only a few hundred yuan. Life is a continual struggle. Many villagers take difficult jobs at Changheba Train Station and the mines in Jinkehe and Ganluo to make ends meet

The head of the village committee said the whole village was looking forward to connection of electricity. And the connection of electricity from Maping Village in the opposite Laocanggou Valley was barely more than 1,000 metres away.

We visited a village with five households in Laochang. It was at the bottom of Laocanggou in the Dadu River Valley, surrounded by steep cliffs. After dinner, we walked in the moonlight along the precipitous cliff till we reached Laomukong at one o'clock the next morning. At Lagugu, five kilometres from the highway, we simply could not take another step forward. This is how our adventure of mountain motorcycling came about. The motorcycle roared along the trail of a few dozen centimetres. Straight up was the steep cliff-face. Down, it was an unfathomable pit. We gave ourselves up completely to fate. The motorcycle rumbled on. The mountain wind howled. On the 5-km mountain trail, we felt like we were going through the passage of a century. At the end of the ride, legs shivering, we were so drained that we could not get off the motorcycle without help from the driver.

Translated by Ezekiel Pana

#### How to Visit the Gulu Village

Location: Gulu Village is located on the cliff at the entry to the Dadu River Valley. It is adjacent to Ganluo County, Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture and Jinkouhe District of Leshan City.

Transportation: Alight at Wusihe Train Station on the Chengdu-Kunming Railway line. Take a passenger van to the railway bridge at 'strip-wide sky' cliff. The fare is 10 yuan. Start climbing on a small mule and horse road by the highway. It takes about three hours to reach Gulu Village.

Tips for climbers: Two legs of the mountain trail to Gulu Village are steep. They were chiselled into the cliff by locals. Do not walk near the wrong side of the trail. Pay special attention to rolling stones overhead. Pass such sections quickly. The road surface is small weathered rocks. Be careful to keep your balance as it is easy to slip. Keep a proper distance from other climbers when going downhill.

Communication equipment: Mobile coverage is intermittent from the foot of the mountain to Gulu Village. A China Mobile transmitter has been erected in Gulu Village. The coverage is good. Do not expect to recharge your gadgets in the village. It is wise to bring backup batteries.

Food and lodging: Local villagers are hospitable. Climbers can stay overnight in their homes and try their preserved ham and potherbs. The temperature on the mountain is low, so bring warm dothes.

- 1. The village is only a few hundred meters above the Dadu River. Beneath the cliff is the torrential Dadu River.
- 2. Gulu Primary School is the only school in the village. The biggest wish of the children is to get down the mountain and see the train
- 3. The Gulu women do the heavy work the same way as the men.
- 4. In many ways, Gulu villagers live a life cut off from the outside world. Even electric lighting eludes them.







### Golden Monkeys

Photos & Article • Pu Tao

Giant pandas are a real crowd-pleaser and are often people's favourite animals. However, the golden monkeys that agilely flip and jump through the forest are no less lovely and rarer than giant pandas. Under first-level state protection, these playful primates will even pose for photographers.





- 1. Sichuan snub-nosed monkeys live in family groups.
- 2. Sichuan snub-nosed monkeys look elegant with their shining golden hair.
- 3. The monkey king poses for the camera.

#### **About Golden Monkeys**

#### Name: Golden monkey

Geographic distribution: Mixed forests of broadleaf and evergreen trees at an altitude of 1,400 ~ 3,000 metres in Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi provinces and the Shennongjia mountainous area in Hubei Province. Like giant pandas, Golden monkeys are unsuited for hot summers, but able to endure severe winters.

Height: 53 ~ 77 cm Weight: 40 ~ 50 kg

Mature age: 4 ~ 6 years old Life span: 16 ~ 18 years

Food: Leaves, tender twigs, flowers, fruit, bark, roots, insects, birds and birds' eggs.

There are three types of golden monkeys in China: the Sichuan snub-nosed monkey (Rhinopithecus roxellanae), Guizhou golden monkey (Rhinopithecus roxellanae brelichi) and Yunnan snub-nosed monkey (Rhinopithecus roxellanae bieti). They are each unique and belong to the first-level protected animals list, along with the giant panda. Sichuan snub-nosed monkeys are found throughout Sichuan, Gansu and Shaanxi; Yunnan snub-nosed monkeys are concentrated in Yunnan, Sichuan and the east of Tibet, while the Guizhou golden monkeys inhabit the area between Guizhou and Sichuan.

#### Looking for Golden Monkeys in Autumn

Among the three types of golden monkey, the Sichuan snub-nosed monkey is the most beautiful. It has coarse, thick, golden hair from shoulder to tail and a stripe of shiny, dark hair sits atop its head like a crown.

In the autumn of 2006, we seven people visited the Sichuan Snub-nosed Monkey Research Centre in the Qinling Mountain Range in the village of Yuhuang in Zhouzhi County of Shaanxi Province. The centre was co-founded by the College of Life Sciences of the Northwest University and the Administration Bureau of the Zhouzhi National Nature Reserve of Sichuan Snub-nosed Monkeys with the aim to do scientific research and training.

#### The Monkey King and his Six Wives

Being a rare animal under first-level national protection, golden monkeys can only be seen in a select few national nature reserves. We planed to hike up to the 1,600-metre high Zhouzhi Nature Reserve of Sichuan Snub-nosed Monkeys early the next morning, that of course, being where the Sichuan snub-nosed monkeys of the Qinling Mountain Range live. Not long after we left the centre, we were stopped by a river over which only two logs stretched. The logs



- 1. Monkeys are coming!
- 2. Love between the mother and
- 3. Hunting for food in the snow.
- 4. Golden monkeys are rare animals under first-level national protection, and can only be seen in national nature reserves.
- 5. The mother monkey takes very good care of its baby.
- 6. A baby monkey climbing a tree.

were not fixed to anything and had we stepped on them they would have rolled. Fortunately, with us was Doctor Qi Xiaoguang from the Northwest University, who was experienced with situations like this. He very quickly found several one-metre-long iron rods and tied the two logs together, then paved them with leaves. In the end, a simple 'bridge' was completed, providing us with a path across the river.

After we crossed the river, we climbed the mountain by following a rugged, narrow path. Around us was a mixed forest of Chinese fir, evergreen, broadleaf and hardwood trees. Wild golden chrysanthemums could be found everywhere, while on rotten birch roots grew heaps of mushrooms. Looking around, we could tell this was the Qinling Sichuan snub-nosed monkeys' territory. We each chose an advantageous spot and installed our telephoto lenses, waiting for monkeys. Within 20 minutes, we heard a guard's voice come from our companion Xiao Qi's intercom, 'Our targets have appeared on the mountain and will climb over it soon.' We were overjoyed.

In a while, we saw some shining golden objects

rolling towards us, the noise growing louder and louder. By the time the objects came into our telephoto range, we found them to be a 40+ kg male monkey and his six mates, each carrying a baby monkey. Xiao Qi told us, 'It's the Monkey King and his six wives.'

Immediately, everyone started to shoot photos. The monkey king must have never seen a scene like this, so many cameras snapping away right before his eyes. But unexpectedly, they were unafraid of us, and even sat on a fallen tree and posed for us.

From September to November is golden monkey mating season. Except for the monkey king's mates, the others can freely choose their spouses. And there are of course times when male monkeys fight over one female monkey.

#### Monkeys in Winter

This January, we visited the Qinling Mountain Range again. It was about six degrees during the day and minus six at night. The river was frozen over, giving us the opportunity to walk on the river. We returned to the place where we had taken pictures last year. The leaves had all fallen and the entire mountain was covered in snow. The forest was so quiet, except for a few squirrels looking for food on the ground.

After a while, the golden monkeys jumped from the other side of the forest toward us. Maybe they were competing for food; they seemed to be moving faster than last autumn. We saw an adult male monkey leaping from one tree to another and two young monkeys quickly sliding down the branches. The monkey king was the most agile, being the first one to land on the ground. A female monkey beside the monkey king seemed too concentrated on the food to notice the freezing snow flakes falling on her back.

It had stopped snowing when we noticed a monkey family. Through our camera lens, we saw the male hold a tree trunk with its front limbs, staring into the far distance; the female was walking toward us on the ground; the little male monkey was copying the monkey king's movements, as if it was on guard; and the rest of the family members hid behind a rock, fast asleep.



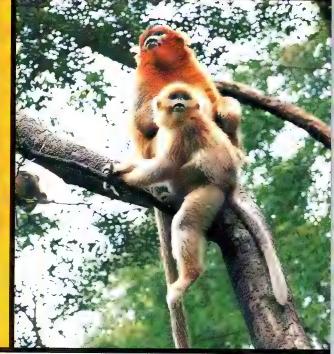






#### The entry magnetic temporary of the converse

- 1. Sichuan snub-nosed monkeys have big-sized bodies, round heads, short ears and dark brown eyes. Their hair is mostly taupe, mixed with some shining golden hair.
- 2. They have thick lips and big proboscises. At the corners of their mouths there are lumps which will become bigger and harder as they grow older.
- 3. Their face is covered by hair, except for the eye sockets and the mouth.
- 4. They live in family groups. The biggest group has reached over 600, which is rare among primates.
- 5. They are always on the move and spend most of their time looking for food.
- 6. They usually take a nap at 2 p.m. and cuddle together in groups of four or five.
- 7. There is a king in one monkey group; he is bigger in size and directs the other monkeys.
- 8. Female monkeys take very good care of their offspring, especially during the breast-feeding period. They always hold their babies close to their chests or hold tight to their tails, giving them no freedom to roam.
- 9. Their nose bones degenerate, leaving two upturned nostrils.
- 10. As the golden monkeys' nostrils turn up to the sky, they are also nicknamed 'snub-nosed monkeys.' It is recorded in some ancient books that golden monkeys had forked tails and that they would use the tails to cover their upturned nostrils when it was raining. Of course, there are no forked-tail land mammals; it's just a story.



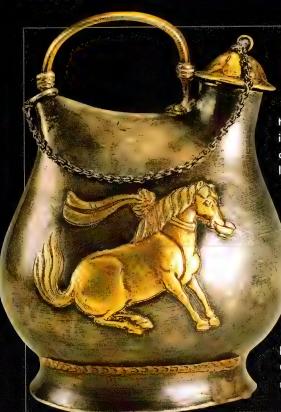




# Unearthed Cultural Relics from Xi'an

Xi'an, known as Chang'an in ancient China, was the capital of Zhou, Qin, Han and Tang dynasties. Although a thousand years have passed, countless treasures and valuable artefacts related to the emperors and imperial court are still buried deep under the ground in this ancient city.

Here are some rare cultural relics collected by the Shaanxi History Museum, each of them a feast for the eye.



#### Gilded Silver Pot with Dancing Horse Pattern

To appreciate this silver pot, its shape is similar to the leather pot used by the Qidan ethnic group in northern China, with two dancing horses on both sides of the pot belly, lying prostrate with raised heads and tilted tails and holding a bowl in their mouths. The silver pot is dazzling while the dancing horses, lid and handle are all gilded. Silver and gold set each other off wonderfully, demonstrating the luxury and magnanimousness of artefacts of the Tang dynasty. According to historical record, during the reign of Li Longji, or known as Emperor Xuanzong (712 – 756) of the Tang dynasty, a grand ceremony would be held on 5 August each year to celebrate his birthday with a horse dance to liven up the celebration. After the armed rebellion led by two regional general heads An Lushan and Shi Siming in 755, An Lushan, knowing well the private affairs of the imperial court, stole several dozen dancing horses to Fanyang, Hebei Province, where his military force stationed. When An Lushan was defeated, the dancing horses were taken by one of his generals. One day when the horses heard the music at a banquet, they began to dance, but the vulgar and ignorant general was shocked and considered their dancing a monstrosity, so had them whipped to death. From then on people seldom see dancing horses. This Qidan-style silver pot gives authenticity to the story of the dancing horses recorded in the history of the Tang dynasty.

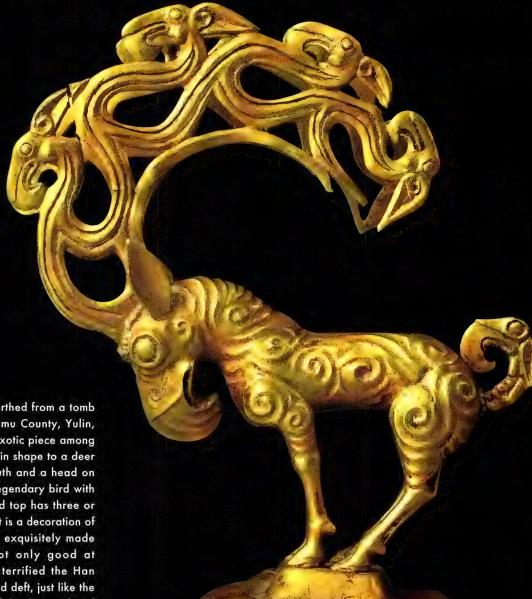
In recent years, Xi'an has seen rapid development. Many new cultural relics have been unearthed with the development of real estate in the ancient capital. Therefore, the government stipulated that real estate developers have to report to the Department of Cultural and Historical Relics before starting construction because cultural relics can be found anywhere in Xi'an. The former ruins of ancient palaces and city structures are protected from development. When the work plan of the Xi'an's subway project was passed, the survey party first investigated the underground situation of the worksite to prevent any damage to valuable relics buried underground. If it is necessary, the route of the subway route might be readjusted to protect the important ruins.

There are grave robbers so long as there are treasures in the grave. As one regime was replaced by a new one the guarding of the tombs would slacken or guards were withdrawn entirely, providing opportunities for robbers. They often did their looting in the dark of night, uncovering cultural relics that had been buried a thousand years under the ground. In recent years, the robbers — teaming up with traders outside China have used new technology and equipment. The areas around Xi'an have been a promised land for such theives. That is why the land around Xi'an is steeped in mystery. Sometimes the unearthed relics not only come as a great surprise for their discoverers, their can also change history.



#### Gilded Silver Dish with Queer Bird Pattern

This silver dish was unearthed from Hejia Village, south of Xi'an. It is in fact a luxury item that would have been collected by an influential family of the Tang dynasty, not a funerary object. Perhaps, it was buried by the owner when the family ran away in a hurry. They might never have returned or maybe they died on the way somewhere, so the treasure was buried underground. A queer bird, known as a feilian, with open wings, stilted tail, even toes and a single-horned ox head was struck in the middle of the dish which might be the God of Wind of the ancient legend, archeological experts believe. Similar supernatural beasts are found on the silverware of the ancient Sasanids regime of Persia, such as the beast with the front of a dog and the hind of a bird.



#### Deer-shaped Golden Beast

This odd-looking beast was unearthed from a tomb of the Huns in Gaotu Village, Shenmu County, Yulin, west of Xi'an in 1957. It is a truly exotic piece among the goldenware of the Huns, similar in shape to a deer with multiple horns, an eagle's mouth and a head on each curled horn, looking like the legendary bird with nine heads. Each petal on the round top has three or four holes so it can be inferred that it is a decoration of the crown of the Huns king. It was exquisitely made showing that the Huns were not only good at horsemanship and fighting which terrified the Han people, but they were also clever and deft, just like the Han. It is typical of the treasures of the Huns cultural relics of the Han dynasty (206 B.C. - 220).

CULTURE



#### **Coloured Female Dancing Figurine**

This artefact was unearthed from Zhang Chenhe's tomb in Bucun Village, Zaoyuan Township, Changwu County, Shaanxi in 1985. Once China's emperors were stung by conscience about the practice of burying people alive with the dead, tomb figures were used instead. The terracotta pieces found in front of Qi Shihuang's grave is clear evidence of the change. During the Tang dynasty, more and more dancing and singing figurines were buried in tombs. This may be related to the stability of the society and the popularity of music. This female dancing figurine has a tall and slender figure with sloping shoulders, steep bridge of the nose, curved eyebrows and alluring eyes. The figurine is wearing double buns, which was popular during the Tang dynasty and could be seen in a lot of murals in ancient tombs. This female figurine is typical of the beautiful unearthed female dancing figurines of the Tang dynasty.

#### Octagonal Silver Cup with Dancing Figures

This silver cup, unearthed from Hejia Village, south suburb of Xi'an, is a treasure collected during the Tang dynasty. It was cast in silver with eight different figures on its eight sides as decoration — singers, dancers, waiters and so on, who were the Hu people, a northern tribe in ancient China, all with sunken eyes and protruding foreheads. The shape of the cup was totally different from that of the traditional Chinese style, so experts inferred that it was imported in the middle of the seventh century or early eighth century or that it might have been made in Xi'an by the western craftsman.





#### Tiger-shaped Tally of Du County

According to the Records of the Grand Historian by Sima Qian, the tally was all-important in ancient times during times of war when military power was in the hands of the monarch. The tally was the only token of empowerment to dispatch troops. This tally was unearthed in Shenjiaqiao Village in the south of Xi'an in 1975. From the inscription, this tally was kept by the commanders of the Du area and the other part of the tally was in the hands of the Qin Emperor Huiwen. Troops could only be dispatched if necessary when the part of the tally taken by the commander could be fitted perfectly with the part in the hands of the king. Since most of the tallies were in the shape of a tiger, it was called a tiger-shaped tally.



#### **Wall Painting of Palace Maids**

The tomb of Princess Yongtai, daughter of Wu Zetian (China's first Empress) and Tang Emperor Gaozong of the Tang dynasty, is located at the south of the mausoleum of her parents in Qianxian County, Shaanxi. It was excavated in 1960, revealing remarkable wall paintings. This is one of them, a top-notch artistic work.

This wall painting, featuring nine palace maids, gives a vivid impression of the individual characteristics, especially facial expressions, showing high artistic standards. One of them, a girl with a cup in her hands, is most intriquing. The girl has a lithe and graceful figure, a quiet manner and an honest, clever and young expression. The painting shows us that a high degree of artistic proficiency was flourishing during the time of the Tang dynasty.

#### Gilded Agate Cup

The agate cup was unearthed in Hejia Village, south of Xi'an in 1970. Experts inferred that it was made before the seventh century, carved from red, brown and white agate. Its shape is exquisite, like an ox horn with a two-horned beast's head on the pointed end similar to an antelope or a goat. This cup is verysimilar to the rhyton cup found in ancient Greece 1,500 years ago. It is said that people considered the rhyton cup a divine vessel with miraculous powers. When it was used to hold wine, it could not only check for poison but also detoxify.



#### The Gilded Bronze Statue of a Buddha and Two Bodhisattvas

This bronze statue was unearthed in Daliuzhai Village, Weiyang District, Xi'an in 1999. It is believed the artefact was made during the late period of the Northern Wei to Eastern Wei dynasties, which was during the second upsurge for Buddhist statue-making in China. Its composition is unusual; its main Buddha is 15 cm in height and it stands on a two-tiered pedestal. The upper tier is carved with a lotus and the lower tier with a relief dragon head in the middle. The wings on the two sides of the pedestal are decorated by a dragon holding a lotus. To our surprise, the parts of the bronze statue, the main Buddha, two Bodhisattvas and the pedestal are connected by mortises and tenons.

Translated by Wang Zengfen



#### History Museum of Shaanxi

Location: About one kilometre west of the Dayan Pagoda; northwest of the cross section of Xiaozhai Donglu Road and Cuihua Road, Xi'an.

Opening hours: 09:00 ~ 17:00

Admission: 40 yuan

Transportation: Take bus No. 5, 14, 24, or 27 and get off at Cuihua Bus Station.

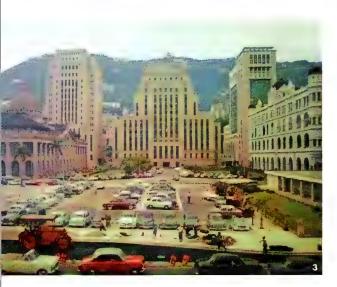




# Victoria City Past & Present

Photos · Chan Yat Nin, Chen Tianquan Article · Chen Tianquan

Hong Kong has experienced over 160 years of evolution since the opening of its port. During its development, many landmark colonial buildings have vanished while the few that still survive stand unnoticed among glass-window skyscrapers.



On 25 January 1841, the British Army landed in Central, when the population of the Hong Kong Island was only 7,450 (according to first census published by the British Hong Kong Government on 15 May 1841). Stanley, in the south with a population of 2,000, had the largest concentration of residents. The slope along the Central waterfront at that time only had one small village of 50 people called 'Kwan Tailoo'. Who at that time would have predicted this area would become an international financial hub with a forest of skyscrapers?

The former Central waterfront, today's Queen's Road, had almost no flat land over 100 years ago, but it was the ideal site for settlement as the British considered this peaceful natural port an ideal place to anchor.





- Victoria City in the mid-1910s.
  The picture shows Connaught Road near the sea.
- 2. Central is almost unrecognizable to the Victoria City of 1910. Only the silhouette of the Peak remains the same. (by Chan Yat Nin)
- 3. Statue Square in the mid-20th century. Centre is the Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation building. (by Zhang Shunguang)

#### Victoria City Built in 1843

On 7 June 1841, Charles Elliot, Chief Superintendent of the Trade of British Subjects in China, proclaimed Hong Kong a free port and started developing Central. The British auctioned the coastal land, constructed the first road from the battalion in Sai Ying Pun to Central (i.e. Hollywood Road), built Victoria Prison and decided to name the section between Glenealy and Garden Road 'Government Hill' which would be used for government offices. The area between Garden Road and Wan Chai was then cordoned off for military use. The British were so impatient that they began establishing their base in Hong Kong even before the formal signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842.

China and Britain held the Exchange of Notes of

the Treaty of Nanking in Hong Kong on 26 June 1843. Three days later, Hong Kong Island was renamed Victoria City to commemorate Queen Victoria, the reigning British queen. The city consisted of Sheung Wan, Central and Ha Wan (now the area between Wan Chai and Admiralty), with Central acting as the city's political and economic centre. Later, Europeans built some Western-style buildings representing the power and authority of the Hong Kong government on Central hillside. These buildings included the office of the Deputy Chief Superintendent of the Trade of British Subjects in China, A.R. Johnston's government office called 'Johnston Lau' (today's Court of Final Appeal), Flagstaff House (Museum of Tea Ware), Murray Barracks (Bank of China building), St. John Cathedral, the first Colonial





Secretariat (Government Secretariat), Government House (Hong Kong Protocol Division), Ping Tao Garden (Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Garden) and the Central Police Station (now closed). The heartland of the colonial city took shape.

#### Land Reclamations Shaped the Downtown Area

In the mid-19th century, the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom caused turmoil on the Chinese mainland. War and turmoil caused many villagers to flee to Hong Kong, causing a population surge in the city. Central became increasingly more crowded. In 1868, the government decided on its first large-scale land reclamation, which moved the coastline northward from Queen's Road to Des Voeux Road. The following year, the original Hong Kong City Hall was built on this reclaimed land, beside which rose the second Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Co. (HSBC) building.

In 1890, Hong Kong Governor Des Voeux agreed to Chater's (a rich merchant) suggestion to carry out at a second large-scale land reclamation which pushed the coastline forward once more and thus giving birth to Statue Square, Chater Road and



- 1. Statue Square in 1910. On the lower right corner of the picture is Des Voeux Road, to the north of which is a piece of land reclaimed in the late 19th century. On the right is the Supreme Court Building, today's Legislative Council. The far building is the Hong Kong Club Building which was torn down in 1981.
- 2. Queen Victoria's Statue in Victoria Park was originally in Statue Square, Central. Victoria City was named after Queen Victoria. (by Chen Tianquan)
- 3. The Legislative Council building was the Supreme Court in 1912, and is one of the oldest existing buildings in Central. (by Chen Tianquan)
- 4-7. The 1903 boundary stone of Victoria City still stands. (by Chen Tianquan)

Connaught Road. The original public pier near Pedder Street on Des Voeux Road was moved to a place close to Ice House Street on Connaught Road and renamed Star Ferry Pier. Statue Square was named after Queen Victoria, and which contained a bronze statue of Queen Victoria, and her successor King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra and their successors King George V and Queen Mary. Statue Square seems to be a gathering place of the British royal family! The Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Co. opposite the square received approval to erect a statue of Sir Thomas Jackson (1841 – 1915, Chief









Manager of HSBC) in the square. But after World War II, only Sir Thomas Jackson's statue remained in the square. The original Queen Victoria statue was relocated to the newly built Victoria Park after having been returned from Japan.

#### The Six Remaining Boundary Stones

With the increase in population, Victoria City grew larger. The Hong Kong government declared the boundary of Victoria City in the Hong Kong Government Gazette in 1903 and erected six boundary stones, each engraved with 'City Boundary 1903,' to mark the limits of the city. These granite stones remain to this day. They are located at Sai Ning Street Park in Kennedy Town, Pokfulam Road (near Pokfield Road), Hatton Road (near Kotewall Road), the border of Old Peak Road and Tregunter Path, Bowen Road in Wan Chai and Wong Nai Chung Road in Happy Valley. With a history of over 100 years, they stand as a testament to the development of Victoria City. Long neglected, few people now give them a passing glance.

In the old days, Chinese people called Victoria City 'Four Wans (rings) and Nine Yeuks (Districts).' The four wans refer to Sai Wan ('West Ring') Sheung Wan ('Upper Ring'), Choong Wan or Chung Wan ('Central Ring', present-day Central) and Ha Wan ('Lower Ring', present-day Wan Chai). The four wans are further divided into nine 'yeuks' whose names have changed many times. In 1917 there was Kennedy Town, Shek Tong Tsui, Sai Ying Poon, the Peak (today's Tai Ping Shan Street), Sheung Wan, Choong Wan, Ha Wan, Wan Chai and Bowrington (Ngo Keng). The boundary of these Nine Yeuks was similar to the limits of Victoria City as proclaimed by the Hong Kong government in 1903. But interestingly, there are still many foreign books today that mistakenly regard Victoria City the 'capital' of old Hong Kong. Cathy Pacific Airways flight maps in aircraft also shows Hong Kong as Victoria City. We can thus conclude that Victoria City became synonymous with Hong Kong.

#### **European-style City Planning**

European cities mostly usually have a central square, around which stand beautiful buildings. Statue Square, for example, was built along these lines. To its east was the Former Supreme Court (Legislative Council Building) and the Hong Kong Club Building (rebuilt into a new plaza); to its south, the old Hong Kong & Shanghai Banking Corporation and the Standard Chartered Bank; to its west, Prince House (rebuilt into a new plaza) and Queen House (Mandarin Oriental Hotel); and to its north, a pier specially used by governmental officials. Everything was well planned and structured.

The section of Connaught Road that ran along the coast to the west of Statue Square quickly became the prey of real estate developers. A group of Victorian buildings soon sprang up, some as grand as those on the Bund in Shanghai. These included the Hong Kong Club Building, Queen House, York House, King House, Union House and the Hong Kong General Post Office (World Wide House). However, all we have of this these buildings today are old photographs.

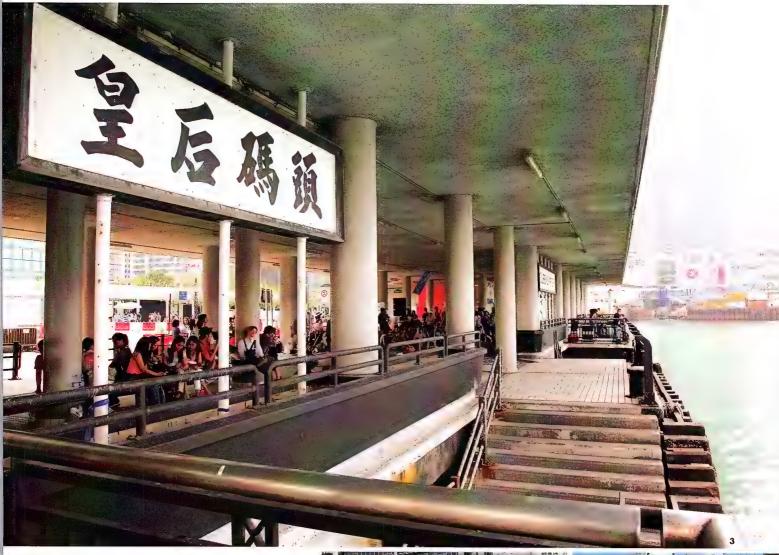
In 1925, Queen's Pier was built near Statue Square. A sheltered pier with round pillars and arches, the structure was the traditional landing place of British monarchs and governors since Sir Cecil Clementi. Governors would land at Queen's Pier, followed by the official swearing-in.

Land reclamation undertaken in Central in the early 1950s pushed Queen's Pier and Star Ferry Pier further out into the harbour. The government then built Edinburgh Place and the second-generation City Hall, the first multifunctional entertainment centre in Hong

- 1. Star Ferry Pier prior to its demolition in November 2006. (by Chen Tianquan)
- 2. Star Ferry Pier before being demolished. (by Chen Tianquan)
- 3. The 53-year-old Queen's Pier has finally been demolished. (by Chen Tianguan)
- 4. The Court of Final Appeal is one of the few remaining Victorian buildings. (by Chen Tianquan)
- 5. The former office and residence of the Commander of the British Forces is now the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware. (by Chen Tianquan)







Kong on the newly reclaimed land. The two piers and the City Hall were designed in the modern British style. They, along with Edinburgh Place, were popular public recreational spots at the time.

Queen's Pier retained its status after its relocation. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II officially visited Hong Kong in 1975 and 1986 aboard the official governor's yacht, the Lady Maurine, instead of car via the Cross-Harbour Tunnel. She landed on Queen's Pier and received a warm welcome from a guard of honour in Edinburgh Place. Although the last governor, Christopher Patten, didn't wear the uniform of a colonial administrator for his swearing-in, he still followed tradition by landing on Queen's Pier for his official inauguration.

The layout of Victoria City's European-style buildings shows that the British carefully planned this city. For instance, the official government buildings are mostly located on high ground with a marvellous view of the sea, from which one can overlook the surrounding buildings. This arrangement symbolizes the government's rule over the city. Along the





waterfront stand luxurious shopping malls and plazas. Seen from the sea, these buildings form a step-like layout on the mountain slope. Thanks to this design, buildings close to the sea wouldn't block the view of the ones behind them.

#### Diminishing History

Hong Kong is a small island with a large population. Central, Hong Kong's main commercial



centre has experienced tremendous change and much of its history has vanished after World War II. Victoria City is no longer the one shown in old pictures and urban development seems to be getting progressively worse. For example, a skyscraper might

suddenly rise near the coast in Central, one that does not match the surrounding environment at all; or some high-rises suddenly appear, blocking the view of the buildings behind them. Unlike its neighbour Macau, the Hong Kong government attaches a great









 Central Police Station Compound on No. 10 Hollywood Road was built in 1919. Some buildings behind it were built in 1864. (by Chan Yat Nin)

2. Victoria Prison was built in 1841. This part of the East Wing is a later addition. (by Chen Tianquan)

3. D Hall of Victoria Prison looks just like it did in the 19th century. (by Chen Tianquan)

4. The convergence of Des Voeux Road, Chater Road and Pedder Street in the early 20th century. On the right is the General Post Office (completed in 1911), a renaissance-style which is now joined to World Wide House; on the left is Jardine, Matheson and Co, Ltd. (built in 1908). All of these buildings are long gone. (stock image)

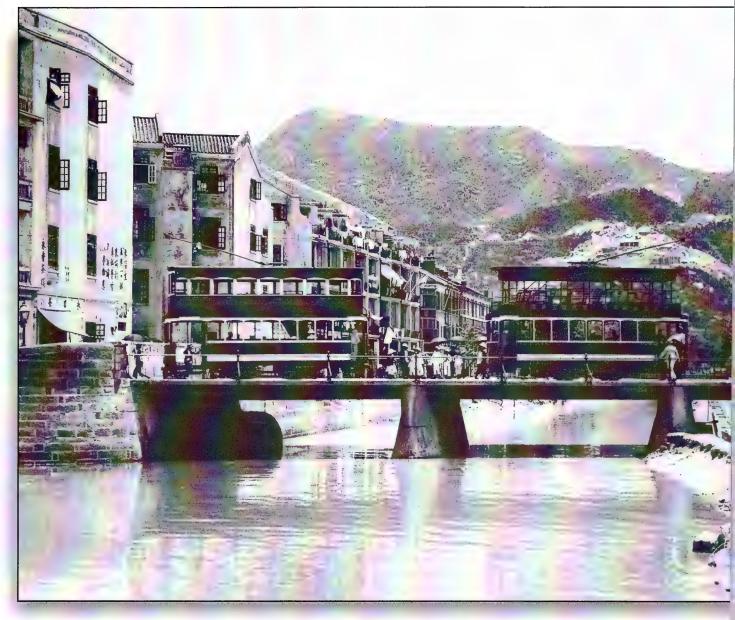
importance to economic benefit, in disregard of historical buildings. Consequently, historical buildings in Central have had to give way to new skyscrapers.

In the past, not many Hong Kong citizens cared about the colonial buildings as they thought of themselves as guests in this land. No voices were raised about the issue of replacing the old colonial buildings with new modern high-rises until 1976 and 1978 they tried to tear down the General Post Office and the Tsim Sha Tsui Terminus. A few intellectuals stood up to fight for them, but ultimately it was fruitless.

Fortunately, the Hong Kong government began to realize the importance of protecting its historical past. They passed the Antiques and Monuments Ordinance in 1976 and established the Hong Kong Antiquities Advisory Board and the Antiquities and Monuments Office. However, because of the long time period it takes to assess antiquities and the fact that the government didn't want to force to declare private buildings as monuments, only 81 historical spots have

been declared as monuments which can be protected under the law. The Hong Kong Antiquities Advisory Board has also declared nearly 500 historical spots as Grade 1, 2 or 3 proposed monuments; however, these are not under the protection of the Antiques and Monuments Ordinance.

The second Hong Kong Club Building to the east of the Statue Square was demolished in 1981 although there were many people opposed to the demolition. It became the last Victorian building (the others like the first Prince House, Queen's House, Royal House and Alexandra House) to be 'removed out of' the heart of Central. Hong Kong people who were born right after the WWVII may still remember this building, but this was not enough to save it from demolition. The only existent declared monument on the square was the former Supreme Court building built in 1912 and designed by famous British architects Sir Aston Webb and Ingress Bell in the Greek revival style. This building reminds people of



Victoria City's past glory.

Government Hill, where a few existing colonial buildings can still be found, is a district that represents Hong Kong's modern history. The buildings there span one and a half centuries, and are a witness to the development of the Settlement since the opening of the harbour.

#### The Central Axis, an Epitome of Hong Kong's Modern History

There is a central axis connecting the buildings on the Government Hill and those at the foot of the hill. It's similar to the layout of the Forbidden City in Beijing. This central axis is believed by some *fengshui* enthusiasts to be the 'dragon's pulse' that brings good fortune to Hong Kong. It starts from the Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Garden, passes the Protocol Division, the Government Secretariat, St. John

Cathedral, Court of Final Appeal, Battery Path (the former site of Central Battery), the fourth-generation HSBC building, Legislative Council Building, Hong Kong City Hall, Queen's Pier and the recently demolished Star Ferry Pier, and ends at Kowloon.

Some important colonial buildings can be found on both sides of this axis. For instance, on the east side are the office and residence of the Commander of the British Forces (also named Flagstaff House) in Hong Kong Park, Rawlinson House now the Cotton Tree Drive Marriage Registry, Cassels Block, now used by the Hong Kong Visual Arts Centre and Wavell Block, now used as an educational centre. While on the west side stand Bishop's House (Anglican Church) and the Central Police Station Compound (includes the Central Police Station, the Victoria Prison, and former Central Magistracy). The historical buildings around Government Hill, including the oldest

- 1. Ngo Keng Kiu (literally Goose Neck Bridge) in 1920's Wan Chai. While the bus looks the same, the bridge and the whole area have completely been changed. (stock image)
- 2. Double-decked trams haven't changed much in shape, although their outlooks have become more commercialised. (by Chan Yat Nin)
- 3. One of Wan Chai's landmarks Blue House was built in 1920. (by Chan Yat Nin)
- 4. Previously the Bacteriological Institute, the Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences is a good example of creative reuse of a historical building. (by Chan Yat Nin)



Western-style houses — Flagpole House (1846) and Bishop's House (1851), each has its own functions and stories. They serve as evidence of Hong Kong's over a century's development in terms of politics, economy, religion, law, military affairs and culture.

Had the Hong Kong government instituted policy to protect the historical buildings around Government Hill and Statue Square much earlier than it did, the city could have applied for World Cultural Heritage status. Unfortunately, these buildings have been encroached by modern high-rises. Queen's Pier, for example, a Grade 1 declared monument, could not be saved from demolition. Edinburgh Place will also be soon transformed into a traffic thoroughfare; while the Government Secretariat will be relocated to Tamar and the green Government Hill will fall into real estate developers' hands and be covered by skyscrapers. By that time, this central axis will no longer exist and the fengshui will be sabotaged.

#### Good Memories of the Old City

It's now imperative for the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government to deal with the problem of levelling Queen's Pier. Many people consider it an ordinary structure which was once used only for official swearing-ins and is now pointless to preserve. But people also believe that this pier is not just a construction, it is an integral element of its surroundings of Star Ferry Pier, City Hall and Edinburgh Place. It displays the simple design style of the 1950s-60s.

In addition, Hong Kong people's memories about Queen's Pier are not only limited to it as a landing place for official swearings-in. Many old Hong Kong movies and TV shows were shot here, faithfully show Hong Kong people's cultural life. Older Hongkongers still remember the time they swam in the sea near

Queen's Pier and took a walla-walla (a small-sized boat with an electric motor) at Queen's Pier before the harbour-crossing tunnel was completed, while young people did all sorts of fun things here, such as enjoying fireworks, gossiping and dating, taking wedding pictures and sailing. People have many good memories of this place.

To remember colonial history doesn't mean we are nostalgic for British rule; it is simply a reminder of Hong Kong's achievements and past glorious stories. Historical buildings serve as proof of this.

Buildings are a city's landmarks, a reminder of life in the past and a symbol of citizens' status. If the monument to one period of history is demolished, that period of time will be easily forgotten. We cannot imagine what the Central General Post Office looked like in the past; neither can we picture Statue Square surrounded by classic-style buildings. Only a city with memories is able to offer historical and cultural stories to later generations.

Translated by Nicole Ouyang







# Morte Be Missed in Macau

Just about 74 km or 40 sea miles away from Hong Kong, the Macau SAR has put much effort in preserving its heritage, and has wisely turned these time-honoured areas into one of the brightest tourist attractions in the small territory in recent years. Let's highlight ten of these heritage sites for you!

The Historic Centre of Macau is an urban area centred around the old city of Macau; these include the eight squares of Barra Square, Lilau Square, St. Augustine's Square, Senado Square, Cathedral Square, St. Dominic's Square, Company of Jesus Square and Camoes Square, and the 22 historic buildings of the A-Ma Temple, the Moorish Baracks, Mandarin's House, St. Lawrence's Church, St. Joseph's Seminary and Church, Dom Pedro V Theatre, the Sir Robert Ho Tung Library, St. Augustine's Church, the 'Leal Senado' Building, the Sam Kai Vui Kun Temple, the Holy House of Mercy, the Cathedral, the Lou Kau Mansion, St. Dominic's Church, the Ruins of St. Paul's, the Na Cha Temple, the section of the Old City Walls, Mount Fortress, St. Anthony's Church, the Casa Garden, the Protestant Cemetery, and the Guia Fortress (including the Guia Chapel and Lighthouse). This list includes not only China's oldest surviving church and fortress, China's first western-styled theatre and first light house, but also examples of residences of wealthy merchants of the late Qing dynasty.

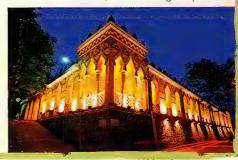
The Historic Centre of Macau helps to maintain a product of cultural exchange between the East and West spanning over 400 years, and is currently the oldest, largest, and best-preserved historic centre of both Eastern and Western architecture in China today.



#### **Moorish Barracks**

Built in 1874 by the Italian architect Cassuto, this was originally used

to accommodate an Indian regiment from Goa, but now serves as the offices of the Macau Maritime Administration. The building shows Islamic influence in its design.



#### St. Lawrence't Church

#### St. Joseph's Seminary and Church

The seminary, constructed in 1728, produced many important figures in the field of missionary work in many areas of China and Southeast Asia, and was given the name of the 'Catholic Shaolin Temple' by locals. The church

was built later in 1758, and has many similarities with St. Paul's Church, hence its name of 'Little St. Paul's'. It was built in the Baroque style, and houses a relic of the first missionary to East Asia.





St. Daniel's Charde



#### Guia Fortress & Lighthouse

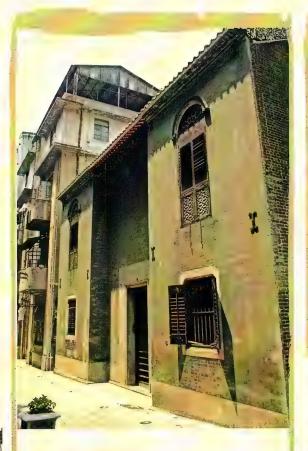
Guia fortress was built in 1622 and is the highest point in Macau, with views of the whole peninsula. The fortress also contains the Guia lighthouse and chapel. Its location is taken as the international location of Macau. Guia chapel, built in 1622, contains colourful murals painted using a mixture of Chinese and Wesern techniques, and is unique amongst churches in the area.



#### The Roms of St. Pool's



Secodo Signare



#### **Dom Pedro V Theatre**

This theatre was built by the Portuguese in 1860 to commemorate King Pedro V. At the time only the main part of the theatre was built, and it was not until 1873 that the neo-classical facade was added. It is the

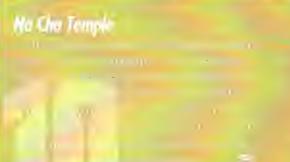


earliest westernstyled theatre in
China, and was
originally used by
the local
Portuguese
community for
important civil
functions. It is now
a venue for
staging plays and
concerts.

#### Lou Kau Mansion

Built in 1889, this used to be the residence of the family of Lou Kau, a prominent Macanese businessman. It is a two-storey building constructed using grey-green brick in the Chinese style, and is a typical example of the xiguans (Western Guangzhou) architectural style of the late Qing dynasty. The interior of the mansion is a mixture of Eastern and Western styles, and was designed in accordance with fengshui.





#### The Southernmost End of Chinese Coast

# Suwen

Photos • Huang Yanhong, Li Hongyan Article • Huang Yanhong

Travel 20 km west from Suwen County, Zhangjiang City, Guangdong and you will reach the southernmost end of the Chinese coast. There you will find an ancient 'coral village' that was built from around 300 years ago.

#### **A Village of Coral Houses**

Xindi Village is a small yet densely populated place of about 700 households and over 6,000 people. Today, most buildings are recently built small houses and not many of the old coral houses remain.



Nevertheless, many yard walls of coral still exist.

Mr. Mo is head of one household and he is entertaining a large group of visitors, boisterous group, chatting and watching TV. Seeing tourists and strangers, Mr Ho and his household immediately set a big round table outside the house. They served us local varieties of sweet and salty puddings, delicious and non-sticky to the teeth. The most senior man in the village, whom everyone called 'Uncle Fourth', said that the house was 70 or 80 years old and in those days, coral houses were everywhere in the village. As they got richer, many villagers started to build new houses. Uncle Fourth's new house was just behind and it was a small mansion-style building. The houses of the residents are all triple court structures, consisting of an ancestor's room at the front and one coral room on each of the two sides. One of them had been

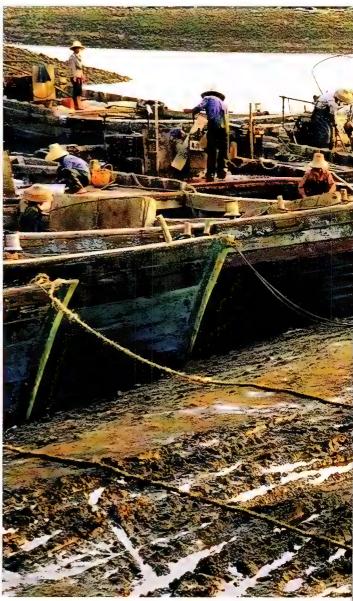
- Fishermen once preferred living in these ancient coral houses.
- 2. A seaside workplace for altering pearl clamshells.
- 3. Fishermen carry their catch back home at sunset.











pulled down recently as it was listing to one side.

Many elderly people like to live in coral houses as they are cool in summer. It is also safer during typhoon season as the rooms are less likely to hurt even they collapse. There is also a well in the courtyard. The water, which is of good quality, is suitable for making tofu.

Mr. Mo Banghe's eldest son excels academically and won a place at the China University of Technology. If getting into a top university is a great honour for city dwellers, it is even more so for the residents of this rather remote area. All his three children are still students and school fees are a heavy financial burden for Mr. Mo who makes a living from fishing and shrimp rearing. The annual university tuition fee is 5,600 yuan is cheaper than at other universities as it is an institution of high ranking across

the country.

When the freshman left the village for his university study, the villagers spent 3,000 yuan on firecrackers for the celebration and sent three cars to escort him on his way. The firecrackers were lit throughout the way and the cars moved very slowly. It took three hours to reach Hai'an East Station. Some villagers volunteered to pay the academic expenses of this not well-off student. However, his uncle wouldn't hear of this and paid the boy's expenses himself. So villagers bought a vast amount of firecrackers and gave the boy a big send-off instead.

#### Making a Living Out of the Sea

Apart from the 1,000 working outside the village, most villagers still make a living from of the sea, catching fish, rearing shrimp, sun-drying salt, pearl-

These girls take a professional attitude to their shell-processing work

2. Fishermen busy arranging fishing cages after a day's work.

3. A scene at the fishing port. (by Li Xiongyan)



farming — all the free bounty of the sea.

Along the coast of Suwen, you can see many grass houses in which women work. They use a small straw to put two small white beads (which are made of powder ground from seashells) into the clams of pearl oysters and put them into the sea. After a year, they will turn into real pearls and the price of 0.5 kg of harvested pearls is about 3,000 ~ to 4,000 yuan. The price once reached a historical high of 12,000 yuan per Chinese catty which is a substantial amount of money. There are many pearl farmers in the Xindi Village and there are even more in Jiaowei (Corner End) Township nearby where 40 percent of fishermen are pearl farmers.

I bumped into an old villager whose son is also rearing pearls and who can make a monthly income of over 20,000 yuan. A total of 0.5 kg of pearls

worth 3,000 yuan consists of about 1,000 pieces. The old villager is now retired. The factory he worked for was closed down but luckily he was able to get a pension of about 300 yuan. I hung out with him on the seashore on a beach two kilometres in width. It is the widest beach I have even seen. The beach faces Hainan Island. When the sky is clear, you can see the lights on the opposite shore at night. He said during the second and tenth lunar months, the low tides are the lowest of the year. There is a folk saying, 'In the tenth lunar month, whether in trousers or in a dress. you can walk across the sea to Hainan.

On the seashore, pools separated by dams are used for shrimp rearing and sun-drying salt. A plot of 7 fen (a Chinese unit of length), in a cycle of 15 days, can produce about one ton of salt. More than 200 years ago, villagers started to make use of the tides to



obtain sun-dried salt derived from seawater. The salt fields in front of us now were built after 1974.

#### Amazing 'Cross Wave'

Leaving the Xindi Village, I then went to the Lighthouse Cape at Jiaowei Township. It was named after the French built a lighthouse and settled in the area in 1890 during the Qing dynasty. The lighthouse was destroyed in 1942 and today only the remains of its supporting wall are left. It is 19.9 metres wide and 7.3 metres in depth. In 1953, the lighthouse was rebuilt, with a height of 16 metres. In 1974, it was again renovated with bricks and concrete. The lighthouse is now no longer in use. There is a spiral stairway to the top of the lighthouse where you can get a bird's eye view of the area. A stone dog made in the Qing dynasty is placed next to the lighthouse. According to folklore, the dog was the guardian creature of the lighthouse. In 1994, a new lighthouse, with a hexagonal shape and a height of 36 metres, was built. It is the only marine signal light tower in the Qiongzhou Strait and the South China Sea, as well as the landmark of the southernmost end of the mainland.

Lighthouse Cape geography is very interesting. On one side is the Qiongzhou Strait and on the other is the Beibu Bay in Guangxi. The convergence of two seas creates amazing cross waves which look like a sword stabbing the ocean.

Translated by Ezekiel Pang

#### Travel Tips

Coral Reef Treasure: According to ocean experts, Xuwen owns the largest and most well preserved coral reef in China. During low tide, the coral reef emerging above the water level forms a unique and marvellous oceanic habitat.

Coral grows pretty slowly and only grow a few centimetres every couple of decades. They are also sensitive to changes in the environment. Not only are coral reefs natural indicators of meteorological situations and pollution levels but also the shore's guardian angel against erosion.

There are two places in Suwen to admire the coral reef. One is Lighthouse Cape and the other is near Fang Po Village. Since the area, at this stage, is not quite ready for excursions, the local government has banned boat trips to these locations, so the few fishing boats who offer coral-viewing tours have largely stopped their services. Only one or two vessels are still in business. Actually, it wouldn't be the best place to go to see the coral in any case.

At Lighthouse Cape, some colourful coral can be seen directly from some beaches at low tide. But at Fang Po Village, you see have to go by boat sea as the larger coral reef is further away from the shore and three to four metres below the water.

Transportation: Zhanjiana to Suwen County Seat (by bus): Fare: About 35 yuan (travel time: over 2 hours)

Suwen County Seat to Lighthouse Cape (by bus): Fare: 12 yuan (Take a bus at the exit of Baojian Station, Suwen County Seat to Maichen Town. Change for another at Maichen Town to Jiaowei Township. Then taken a tri-wheeled rickshaw to Lighthouse Cape and the coral reef)

Bao Jian Yuan Bus Station, City South to Jiaowei Township (by coach): 8 yuan Outside Bao Jian Yuan Bus Station to Maichen Town (by taxi: 5 yuan) to Jiaowei (tri-wheeled rickshaw): 2 yuan





1. Fishermen busy picking out pearls from the shells. (by Huang Yanhong)

2. Xuwen owns the largest and most well preserved coral reef in China.



- 1. The pagoda is 1,000 years old and it is the oldest existing wooden Ruddhist tower in China
- 2. All the wooden parts of the pagoda were joined by mortises and tenons, without using a nail and this provides flexibility in the joints and gives the overall structure the capacity to withstand earthquakes.

This tower, located in Yingxian County of NorthChina's Shanxi Province, is the oldest existing wooden Buddhist tower in China. Alona with Italy's Tower of Pisa and France's Eiffel Tower, the Sakyamuni Pagoda can be regarded as one of the three greatest towers in the world.

This ancient pagoda, with a history of almost a thousand years, was built in 1056 during the Liao dynasty. The nine-storey octagonal structure is composed of the base, the body and the pinnacle. Looking from outside it appears to have five storeys, while there are actually four storeys inside. It is 67.31 metres tall and the base diameter is 30. 27 metres. The pagoda weighs 74,000 tons.

All the wooden parts were joined by mortises and tenons, without using a nail and this provides a certain degree of flexibility. The interior storeys strengthened the overall structure and the arch in the tower added to the flexibility, greatly reducing the impact from earthquakes. Also, the eight steel chains on the sides of the tower provide effective lightning protection by diverting striking electric currents to the ground.

The wooden stairways inside enable visitors to the pagoda to walk up to the top. When a breeze



comes, the wind chimes installed on the roof of each story will sound out some beautiful notes. Each floor above the second storey has seats with railings, forming a circular corridor from which visitors can have a bird's eye view of the surrounding area. The pagoda is a classic symbol of the achievements of ancient Chinese architecture.

Translated by Ezekiel Pana

#### Travel Tips

Add: Fogong Temple, Yingxian County, Datong City, Shanxi Province. Transport: Take a bus from Datong City. The distance is about 80 km and the ride takes about 2 hours. Admission: 60 yuan



Although a metropolis, Shanghai has managed to keep its traditional snacks like meat dumplings and stir-fried buns. Some day you may also do as the locals do, stand patiently in line for up to an hour just to buy these mouth-watering snacks which combine the pleasant sensation of delicious dumplings with meat and onions.

Photos & Article · Chen Dongdong

#### All Are Equal in Front of Sheng Jian Bao

Though enjoying the same popularity as pancakes the deep-fried twisted dough stick and glutinous rice rolls and the stir-fried stuffed dumplings (sheng jian bao) are regarded as more superior. Made of half leavened dough filled with minced meat and pork skin jelly, the buns are fried in shallow oil in a flat pan. While cooking, water is added to keep the skin of the bun smooth. When they are cooked, chopped onions and sesame seeds are spread on the top of the dumplings before they are removed from the pan. A local newspaper once said that 'in the eyes of the stir-fried stuffed bun we are all equal. People of Shanghai will complain about waiting for their lovers for five minutes but there is no problem to wait for the stir-fried stuffed bun.'

The Yang's Fry-Dumpling shop located on the gourmet street of Wujiang Road attracts a lot of people from early morning till night with a long queue in front of the bar. Its fried, stuffed dumplings are made of thin wrapping and delicious meat filling together with oil, onions and some other ingredients

producing a crispy, juicy and appetizing taste.

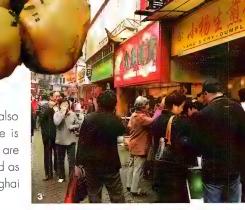
Another reason for people to line up in front of the bar is that the snack bar is so small there is no space inside. There are always many people waiting whether it be breakfast, lunch or supper time and

sometimes when they get their dumplings they do not seem to have the appetite to eat. Afterwards, several more Yang's snack bars were opened to the public, forming the business chain we see in Shanghai today.

The Fengyu Dumpling Shop is also famous in Shanghai and its scale is bigger than Yang's. Its chain shops are scattered all over Shanghai, affirmed as the king of fried dumplings by Shanghai Cookery Association.

 These excellent fried stuffed dumplings are made in Yang's Fry-Dumpling store.

2,3. The fried stuffed dumplings are really delicious with thin wrapper, crispy bottom and meat filling. There are always a big queue in front of the Yaung's Fry-Dumpling.



#### Nanxiang *Xiao Long Bao —* Shanghai Must-try

Nanxiang steamed dumplings (xiao long bao) are made of a thin wrapper and unique filling which is made of lean pork, pork skin jelly with pork skin cooked in hen soup, and ground sesame. The dumplings are really delicious, juicy and appetizing and the cooked, thin wrapper of the steamed dumpling is transparent.

The history of Nanxiang steamed dumpling dates back to the early period of Emperor Guangxu's, reign. A person opened a snack bar in Nanxiang Town in Shanghai, to sell cakes and pastries. Not long after, it had changed to sell steamed dumplings and wonton by Huang Mingxian, adopted son of the boss of the snack bar. At that time it was called Nanxiang big meat buns, which were juicy and delicious with the thin wrapper having more than 10 pleats on top of it, which was the embryonic form of the steamed dumplings. Then Wu Xiangsheng, cousin of Huang Mingxian's daughter-in-law, improved the technology and opened a snack bar to sell steamed dumplings. From then on the steamed dumpling became well-known in Nanxiang.

In 1900, the 26th year of Emperor Guangxu's reign of the Qing dynasty, Wu Xiangsheng closed the snack bar in Nanxiang Town and opened a new restaurant near the lotus pond in Chenghuang Temple for a high price as it was in the Shanghai County seat. He opened one steamed dumpling snack bar, named Changxing Steamed Dumpling, to sell Nanxiang steamed dumplings. Sitting at the window

you could enjoy the wonderful view while enjoying the food.

Today the fillings of Nanxiang steamed dumplings have developed into a variety instead of only minced meat, such as crab meat, ovary of crab, edible fungus and so on. As expected, Nanxiang steamed dumplings were on the list of 2006 master famous snacks of Shanghai confirmed by Shanghai Cookery Association. Remember this, at present only the steamed dumpling sold by Nanxiang Steamed Dumpling restaurant in Yuyuan Tourist Mart are the authentic Nanxiang steamed dumplings.

#### Mingbo Glutinous Rice Dumpling

When you are eating upstairs of the Nanxiang xiao long bao shop you can see a long line of people through the window who are waiting

to buy glutinous rice dumplings from Ningbo Tangyuan Store.

Glutinous rice dumplings (tangyuan) always give Shanghai people a warm feeling because it implies the meaning of reunion and links together with the Spring Festival. In the past as the Spring Festival drew

near every household prepared a lot of glutinous rice flour. In the past, those expatriate Chinese who came back to Shanghai to visit their families and friends would always be moved to tears when they tasted a bowl of *tangyuan*.

The Ningbo tangyuan are made of first grade glutinous rice from Changshu (Jiangsu Province), sesame from the designated places, skinless leaf lard and refined white sugar. That is why it is so popular in Shanghai. And they are made by hand and boiled in a big iron pot. When they are floating they are taken

out and put into another pot of clear water to rinse them so in that they taste delicious but are not greasy. The most popular kind of the rice dumpling has a filling of leaf lard and black sesame. It is refreshing, smooth and sweet but not greasy with an osmanthus scent. If you add some fermented glutinous rice it would be wonderful.



4,5. Nanxiang steamed dumplings taste wonderful with their thin wrappers and juicy filling. Crowds of people wait in front of Nanxiang Snack Bar in Yuyuan Road.

6,7. Tangyuan is a must-eat food for Chinese during the Spring Festival.

#### $\Box$

#### Other Old Brands

There are some other old brands of local Shanghai snacks which tourists should not overlook...

#### Shen Dacheng Restaurat

Located at the pedestrian mall of Nanjing Road and with a history of more than 130 years this snack bar first opened in 1875 in the Qing dynasty. It is convenient for people to take a break and have something to eat in the bar after shopping in the crowded and busy centre although the bar is not spacious. It is famous for its cakes and pastry such as mint cake.

#### Green Poplar Village Restaurant

Located at Nanjing West Road this restaurant opened in 1930s and its name comes from the famous phrase of 'Yangzhou hides in the deep of green poplars' by Wang Yuyang, a famous poet of the Qing dynasty. It serves mainly Huaiyang dishes with its specialities of Stir Fried Fish Slices, Luyang Crispy Chicken, Thousand-layer Pastry and so on and it also offers food made of precious and costly traditional Chinese herbs. Its snacks are delicious and in great variety, such as the steamed dumplings with different vegetable fillings, thick wheat cake with jujube paste and some other cakes which are very popular in Shanghai. Many locals have their breakfast there and buy some of the wide variety of cakes to take home.

#### Wangjiasha Cake Shop

Wangjiasha Cake Shop started its business in 1940s. Since there were residents with the surname of Wang in the area of Nanjing and Shimen roads at that time the name Wangjiasha was adopted. At first it was famous for its fried buns with chicken filling and wontons with shrimp meat filling. Later on it became well-known in Shanghai for its cake with shrimp filling, coloured brown on both sides and a crisp cake looking like a crab shell on top. In the past, the teahouses in Shanghai used to sell crisp cakes and fried buns while making them in the special stoves. Today people can only see that scene in Wangjiasha Cake Shop. The head of the snack bar now searches the country to find lost local foods like traditional sweet porridge which may appear on the menu in the future and come from areas such as Shanghai in Suzhou, Changshu and other places south of Jiangsu Province.

Translated by Wang Zengfen











#### Take Tax

#### Yang's Fry-Dumpling

54 Wujjang Road; 60 Gourmet Street Tel: (21) 6267 6025

3 yuan for four fried stuffed dumplings

#### Fenovu Dumplion Shor

Fengyang Branch: 216 Fengyang Road Tel: (21) 6327 7005

1.80 yuan for four fried stuffed buns

3 yuan for four steamed dumplings

#### Nanxiana Steamed Dumplina

85 Yuyuan Road Tel: (21) 6355 4206

18 yuan for six steamed dumplings with crab meat filling

#### Ningbo Tang Juan Store

98 Yuvuan Road Tel: (21) 6373 9458

8 yuan for eight Ningbo sweet dumplings

Shen Dacheng Restaurant

636 Nanjing Donglu Road Tel: (21) 6322 5615

#### Groom Polar Villago Postgurani

763 Nanjing Road West Tel: (21) 6258 4422

12 yuan for one large wheat cake with jujube paste filling

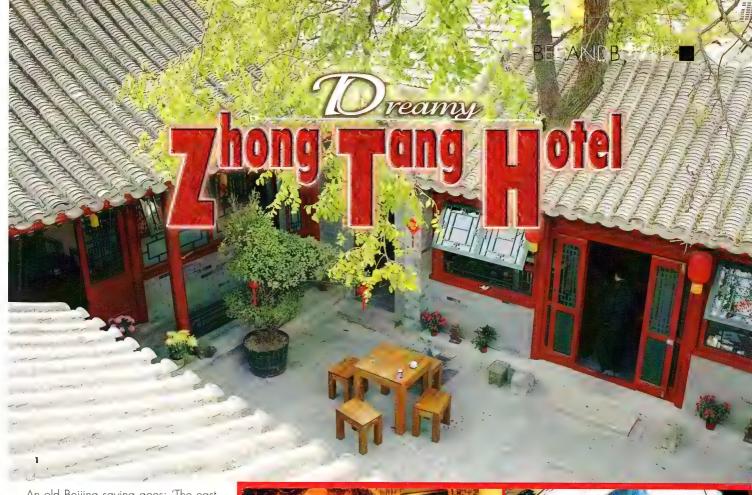
3 yuan for two pieces of Qianceng pastry

#### Wana Jiasha Cake Shor

805 Nanjing Road West Tel: (21) 6253 0404

25 yuan for one share of double-brown cake with shrimp filling

1.5 yuan for one piece of crab shell-colour cake



An old Beijing saying goes: 'The east belongs to the wealthy, and west to the Dignitaries'. One of the best examples is the Zhongtang Hotel located at the Western District (1), which was originally a quadrangle courtyard. During the reign of Qing emperor Yongzheng (1677–1735), it was the residence of Ertai, the most powerful minister of the imperial government.

#### The Star Observation Chamber in the Quadrangle

Ertai was a son of the blue flag Manchu military clan and his grandfather and father were both top government officials at different times though their ranks were not very high. In Ertai's generation, the family's fortune was declining. Ertai had to sell the family home and move to Xishuaifu (West Minister Mansion) Hutong lane. At the time he could not have imagined that his life was moving toward better times.

Ertai and his wife lived in the main room of the Zhongtang Hotel. His first wife died young and he then married the daughter of a government minister. The couple had tried to conceive but without success. One day, Mrs. Ertai had a dream in which an old man with white beard told her to build a room in the northwest wing. The star observation chamber to be built would have good that

would enable Mrs. Ertai to bring good luck to her husband. After she woke up, she and Ertai were determined to build the chamber with a glass ceiling for astrological observation. Such an architectural structure may be one of a kind among all the quadrangle mansions. The couple had to observe the stars and perform religious rituals at a fixed time every day. One year later, Emperor Qian Long succeeded to the throne of the Qing dynasty. Within 13 years, Ertai was promoted to the secretary of the Emperor's inner office and given the title of earl and he eventually became the Premier of the imperial government. His wife

also gave birth to six sons and two daughters, all of whom married nobles and ministers. From then on, this mansion, which looks quite ordinary from the outside, became a legend. Its unique star observation chamber has been preserved to this day.

The chamber has now become a small single room. In comparison with the other luxuriously decorated ones, it looks rather plain (2). Its unique skylight design, however, enables guests to enjoy the blue sky in the daytime and gaze at the stars at night (3). Maybe their dreams will come true too!



Add: No.12 Xi Si Bei Er Tiao, Beijing, China (close to Beihai and Shishahai, and a minute's walk to reach Xidan Commercial Street)
Tel: (10) 6617 1369-2008 Website: www.tanghotel.cn



Recently, I visited southern Sichuan Bamboo Sea in Yibin and the nearby Rock Sea in Xingwen, two stunning attractions where nature charms can be enjoyed.

#### Mature Bamboo Forest

At first when I was told that it would take about five hours to go to Yibin by bus along a rugged road, I hesitated to go. But as soon as I arrived there the fresh, sweet air on my face made me feel comfortable and refreshed and the fatigue of the journey completely vanished. The bamboo forest, known as the Bamboo Sea (Picture 1), is in the Liantian Mountains neighbouring Changning and Jiang'an counties, southeast of Yibin. The bamboo forest covers more than 500 hillocks of 28 big and small mountains, about 60,000 mu (1 mu=0.67 hectare).

There are great varieties of plants in the bamboo forest, including 58 kinds of bamboo. And there are also some rare animals. But you will need to be lucky to see them though, since they do not come out often.

#### The Lake in the Bamboo Sea

There is a 60 *mu* lake in the bamboo sea, formed after a dam was built. Surrounded by green bamboo, it gives visitors a bright new vista. You can enjoy the beautiful scenery from a bamboo raft on the lake or by walking along the red sand road around the lake. Then you can relax and enjoy yourself by drinking tea in the tea house at the lake (Picture 2), a really wonderful way to spend a day.

#### Southern Sichuan Bamboo Sea

**Transportation:** It is 328 km from Chengdu, 318 km from Chongqing and 64 km from Yibin. You may take a bus or train to Yibin first and then take the regular bus from Yibin's South Bus Station directly to the Bamboo Sea. The bus leaves every half hour.

Admission: 60 yuan for low season (1 November ~ 31 December) and 85 yuan for high season (1 January ~ 31 October).

Tel: (831) 498 0888



#### Sea of Towering Rock

Karst, which is shaped by the dissolving action of water on limestone, creates a stunning landscape for visitors to the Rock Sea at Xingwen World Geological Park. The park is located in Yibin's Xingwen County, between the Sichuan Basin and Yunnan-Guizhou Plateau. Limestone is widely scattered throughout the park which has a history of five hundred million years. Carbonate stratum from different time

periods can be seen, each containing rich oceanic fossils of ancient extinct life and sediment. Visitors can see the coral fossils on the cliffs by the roadside. The rock field stretches more than 10 km from east to west and its variously shaped giant rocks appear as if competing with one another for their beauty. Together with the blue water and green trees the scenery is really enchanting.

#### The Karst Cave

Don't miss the park's Tianquan Cave. It is said that the cave, with a length of 10.5 km, has a history of three million years. It is known as the longest natural karst cave open to tourists in China (Picture 3). It has four layers containing rich sediment, such as rock flowers, stalagmites, rock waterfalls and rock terraces, which are in a great variety of shapes and positions.

The entrance to the cave is wide. Walking down the winding stone steps you



can see the natural cave, 'Qionglu Mansion', with an area of 1,200 square metres, with a charming and colourful stalactite corridor. Then, still walking along the stone steps, a giant wide space appears in front of you. You can see a hole at the top, just like a skylight. When the light-beam comes in from the hole it looks like spring water rushing down the stalactite; no wonder it is named 'jade flowing in the flittering light.' (Picture 4)



#### Culture of the Bo People

During the Wanli reign of the Ming dynasty, war broke out between the Bo people and Han people in the Jiusi Mountain region. The Bo people lost the battle and those remaining escaped in disorder, scattering far and near. As a result, the Bo ethnic group disappeared from the scene. But traces of Bo people can still be found in the Geological Park, such as a stone fortress, bronze drum, leather chairs, which tell the history of the Bo people. And the most mysterious thing is that the coffins of the Bo people were placed in crevices on the cliff (Picture 5).

The 265 coffins of the Bo people here were put in a group of groves on the cliff before the Ming dynasty. Generally the coffins are placed ten to 50 metres above the ground, but the height of the coffin of the elder people of the ethnic group could be one hundred metres above ground. Some of the coffins are supported by wooden peas, some are in caves cut into the cliff while others are in natural caves. But how these coffins were put there is still a mystery, even for scientists. A festival celebrating the culture of the Bo people is held by the Bo descendants for nine days around the ninth day of the ninth lunar month to offer sacrifices to their ancestors.

Translated by Wang Zengfen

#### Xingwen Rock Sea

**Transportation:** Xingwen Rock Sea, located southeast of Yibin, is 373 km from Chengdu and 293 km from Chengduand takes about four hours by bus to travel there from Chengduand only one hour from the Southern Sichuan Bamboo Sea.

**Admission:** 125 youn for a through ticket (including the Rock Sea, karst cave, the big hopper Scenic Area and transportation to scenic spots.

Tel: (831) 862 2078





# Quest in Libet

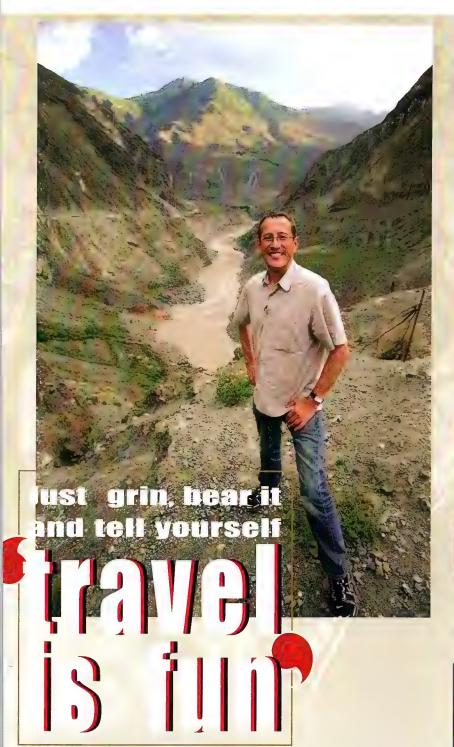
Photos courtesy of CNN Article · Richard Quest

The marvellous thing about a life on the road is that you always have to be ready for new and different experiences. Take for instance my recent visit to China, and into deepest Tibet. I was on an exploration with the famous Chinese explorer Wong How Man for CNN's Quest show. It was my first 'proper' visit to China.

Theoretically, of course, I knew that China is big and diverse, that its airports are modern, that cell phones work in major cities. I just wasn't prepared for the Blackberry to work in remote outposts like Di Quing [Dêqên]. There were so

many similarities and yet so many differences.

As a frequent flyer I always enjoy travelling with an airline I haven't flown before. This trip took me on board China Eastern, a carrier about which I was ignorant. For instance, it has nearly 200 planes with a further more than 60 on order. Ok, so they showed the English version of the safety video AFTER we took off. And the coffee was strong enough to put in the fuel tanks... but the plane took off, the engines kept going and the pilot knew the way. I reminded myself to keep an open mind about my voyages.



Just knowing that I have to disappear into the shrubbery armed with little more than toilet paper and a wet wipe fills me with utter dread. But I gamely kept an open mind, went along and inadvertently survived with a warming sense of achievement - if not exactly enjoyment.

There was one nasty moment when a vehicle broke down. To be more accurate, the engine nearly fell out: but who knew that a block of wood propped under the mounting would keep the engine in place for another 700 kilometres?

Oh yes, and one more tip, should you find yourself 4,000 metres up the Himalaya's with little between you and the mountain precipice than your beast. If another horse laden with camping gear bolts out of the blue - get out of the way!

All-in-all there were no major disasters at least none that can make it into print. I can tell you that the massage offerings at the spa in Kunming is another matter entirely! Whatever the 'unusual' events, I just had to keep telling myself; 'Keep an open mind and enjoy'!

This is all the more important at this time of the year, when our business travels are so often rudely interrupted by holiday-making families cluttering up the airports, clogging up the check-in and making mischief in the elite lounges! Just grin, bear it and tell yourself 'travel is fun'. It is about experiencing new and exciting cultures. So while your day trip to a sales conference in Munich isn't the most dramatic travel event, there is always the potential for something new to happen.

And even though I might not be back under canvas for another 30 years at least, I have reminded myself why I go on the road so much. It is to see and to learn. And wherever your travels may take you this summer, I hope they are profitable.



Richard Quest is one of the most instantly recognizable members of the CNN team; covering an extensive range of breaking news and business stories, as well as feature programming, he has become one of the network's highest profile presenters. Quest is firmly established as an expert on business travel issues and currently works as a CNN anchor and correspondent.

His regular programs include 'CNN Business Traveller', as well as his own hour-long feature program, 'Quest'. The hour-long feature program focuses on a search for excellence in a given field and in the edition looking at genetics, Quest mocked himself for scoring only 96 points in his Intelligence Quotient (IQ) test. But in addition to his first class newsgathering credentials it is his unique willingness to engage in any activity, from singing to walking the catwalk, that makes him so consistently popular with viewers around the world.

For more details on and video extracts from Richard's programs go to www.cnn.com/quest and www.cnn.com/businesstraveller

### aohsiung The Changing

Photos & Article · Dr. Engelbert Altenburger



The urban setting of Kaohsiung is unique, where driving on the rectangular road arid evokes feelings of bygone good old days of the American Dream, which however may come to a sudden end when getting stuck in backyard lanes and alleys. Then remember: you are in Kaohsiung, the mesmerizing harbour city of Taiwan's 'wild east'!

Located on the southwestern-coast of Taiwan, at the rim of the tropics 22 north and 120 east, Kaohsiung stretches over a densely populated and industrialized area of 154 sq km, where more than 1.5 million people live. Surrounded by sea and mountains, this Taiwan's leading harbour city in 2004 handled a cargo of 9.7 million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent unit) or 152 million tons of goods, which then put Kaohsiung on row six of the world's largest container ports (after Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Shenzhen and Pusan).

Kaohsiung has been changing since 2000. Pollution has come under control and the blistering summer heat is balanced by a relieving breeze from the sea. Visitors once frowning about the

urban, industrial and rural mixture of missing international standards are now approaching a typical southern Taiwan community presently upgrading with prestigious projects such as the new harbour front, ultra-modern shopping, software and logistic centres, subway lines, eco-parks, sport stadiums, etc. The leading industrial location site is transforming into a key service centre, ambitiously preparing for the Eighth World Games in 2009, the 'Little Olympiads' following the 2008 Olympics.

The traveller may see Kaohsiung not immediately as a paradise worth to discover, but he will be that more surprised by meeting, welcoming friendly people and unexpected adventures. From the Kaohsiung Airport is the 10 km long main harbour channel with the



island strip of Chichin. Its northern tip is crowned by a coral rock, where in 1876 (Qing dynasty) a military fort was built to control the harbour. From there the city's skyline to the east is dominated by the stylish feng-shui landmark of the 85-storey Tuntex skyscraper. To the north, beyond today's northern harbour mouth, rises an ancient coral reef: the 356-metre high Wanshou (Longevity) Mountain. The strong movement of the Eurasian plate that submerges eastward under southern Taiwan below the Pacific plate has lifted up the tropical corals providing a scenery similar to the Cote d'Azur in southern France. Insiders speak of 'Monkey Mountain' as printed on the first Dutch maps, where indigenous Macaque monkeys rule the subtropical forests and wait for hikers to pick up their attention... and food.

When the Dutch had arrived in the 17th century and settled near today's Tainan, Kaohsiung consisted just of a small harbour at Chichin, where once the aboriginal Makadao ('bamboo-forest') tribe had dwelled. Settlers arriving from the mainland's Min-nan (southern Fujian) area emulated this name into Ta-Kao. The characters, then written as 'beat the dog' in Chinese, were changed by the Japanese in 1924 into 'High-Hero' while keeping the pronunciation Taka-O. Under colonial rule the harbour was transferred to Hamasen. There, opposite of Chichin, a lagoon and salt pans were transformed into urban ground and a harbour railway built to connect with Tainan. After WW II historic Yancheng (Salt City) District was superseded by a rambling new town east of Love River. The river has become a



tourist axis connected with the developing harbour front and a 'Green Belt'. This stretches from 'Monkey Mountain' northeastward to Banpingshan (Semi-Screen Mountain), a former limestone quarry for the local cement industry and now an ecozone with attractive hiking trails and lookouts. Within short walking distance from this legendary coral reef Taiwan's new High-Speed-Railway since 2007 transports hasty passengers in just two hours to the island's capital Taipei. Visitors with more leisure, however, may discover nearby Lotus Lake, Kaohsiung's oldest and most famous tourist landmark with its Twin-Pagodas and Confucius Temple, the old Fengshan Town which in 17th century was founded as Kaohiung's first administrative centre and urban nucleus, or the old botanical garden with numerous unique indigenous plants.

The 'Green Belt' will play a key role for the city's future attractiveness. It is complemented by the rare feng-shui landscape setting and young, but exotic history. The Holy Rosary Cathedral east of Love River, for instance, documents the early Christian mission on Taiwan, the red-brick British consulate opposite Chichin some bygone British colonial glory, and the adjacent 18-King Temple those unlucky brave fishermen which are said to have stranded here after a dreadful journey from the continent and mistakenly were sentenced to death by Qing-dynasty officials. Kaohsiung not only has a vision, but in itself is one where history seems to make halt and rural life becomes apparent.

- 1. Kaohsiung: the homelike harbour city.
- 2. Chinese tradition.
- 3. Lanterns at Tianhou Temple in Chichin Island.
- 4. The Tuntex 85-storey sky tower.



Hard cover Hystria HK\$120 Focus on Yunnan The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-La, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about onethird of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and

customs

#### Focus on Fuiian

Situated on the southeast coast, Fujian Province overlooks Taiwan Island across the Taiwan Strait. Its mountainous landscape includes the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, one of the UN World Heritage sites in China. The province's zigzag coastlines, numerous beaches and charming seas offer spectacular scenic beauty as well as historical and cultural interest in

such places as the Drumming Wave Islet in Xiamen a n d Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island.

Focus on Shanghai

Papertiack Without HK\$76 Shanghai, the largest metropolis in China, and formerly the Far East financial centre, has experienced dramatic development over the past century. The world-famous Bund along the Huangpu River shows you buildings of different historical periods and varied architectural styles, while skyscrapers are rising in the new area of Pudong. Shanghai's multiculturism is seen in

> its music - operas, nostalgic jazz and discos and in the busy commercial district of Nanjing and Huaihai roads

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#### Focus on Shaanxi

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty

stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the vellow earth of the Loess Plateau.

Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the

#### Mountain. The capital, Guangzhou, offers plenty of history in its museums, temples, mosques and old Guangdong colonial buildings.

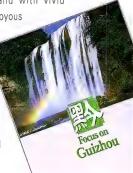
Focus on Guangdong

An important gateway into China, the fertile Pearl River Delta of the southern province of Guangdong fans out from Guangzhou to the South China Sea and borders Hong Kong and Macao. The province's natural scenic spots include the limestone pinnacles of Zhaoging's Seven Star Crags, the red sandstone of Danxia Mountain, and the volcanic beauty of Xigiao

#### Focus on Guizhou Guizhou is a land of splendid natural

scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid

customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.



**Focus on Tianiin** 

Tianiin, one of the four municipalities under direct Central Government administration. is an important industrial and commercial centre of China and the biggest port in the north. The history of the city can be found in its Ancient Culture Street, 100-year-old Western-style buildings, Opera Museum and Mazu Temple. Besides the TV Tower and the Haihe River

in the city, there are scenic spots in the outskirts. including the Dule Temple and the Great Wall at Huangya Pass

Hard cover HKST20 Focus on Xiniiana

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, which provide tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem imbedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak — the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan.

The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak. Mongolian. Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique colourful culture.



Focus on Beijing

Beijing is a metropolis of everlasting charm. There are simply too many captivating things to see, to experience and to taste in this grand city with both old glamour and new mobility. There are historical sites such as the Palace Museum (the Forbidden City), the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, and the Ming Tombs; there are also many scenic spots in its outskirts. Recently, tours have been organised for visitors to taste the real Beijing flavour of life - touring the small back lanes, having tea in a traditional-style teahouse and enjoying the Peking Opera.



#### Focus on Shanxi

Shanxi Province, one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilisation, has impressive ancient architecture and a wealth of well-preserved Buddhist temples, monasteries and grottoes. Among the most famous are the Yungang Grottoes containing some of China's oldest sculptures and Buddhist art, the Yongle Palace, the Jinci Temple, the Hanging

Mountain one of China's most famous sacred Buddhist

Monastery built on a sheer cliff and the Wutai lands.

Focus on Guandxi

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations - limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the

minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.



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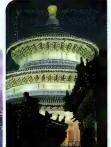
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#### Oct 31 ~ Nov 8 Guangxi

#### **Guilin Scenery Tourism Festival**

Guilin, one of China's most famous scenic spots in southern Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, opened its traditional tourism festival annually on November 23 since 1993. The festival has been highlighted its beautiful hills and waters as well as its unique culture. The tour festival ains to display the city's beautiful natural scenery, unique folk customs and enchanting Lijiang River scenes. A series of cultural activities and performances will be held throughout the festival.



#### October

#### **Huangshan Mountain** International Tourist **Festival**

Since the Huangshan Mountain International Tourist Festival was held in 1991 the first time: the festival has been a favourite event and attracts numerous visitors from all over the world. Rich and colourful activities are held during the festival including the traditional lantern fair, folk-custom performances, a painting and calligraphy exhibition and Huangshan specialties show. Visiting the famous Huangshan, the ancient Anhui traditional architectures, and the picturesque Shexian County are also important features of the festival.





20 ~ 25 Sept

Jianasu

#### Suzhou Silk Tourist Festival

Suzhou is a city with a long history of silk production. Indeed, it is known as the 'Silk Capital'. During the Suzhou Silk Tourist Festival, a silk clothes exhibition, a fashion performance accompanied by the notable symphony orchestra, and activities that are linked with the theme of silk are held every year to attract people from all over the world. Some famous scenic spots in Suzhou are also highlighted during the



#### 16 Sept ~ 8 Oct

#### Shanghai Tourist Festival

The annual Shanghai Tourist Festival offers a huge amount of traditional and not-so-traditional entertainment at venues across the city, and also incorporates the Shanghai Shopping festival. There's much hype around town at the time and plenty of opportunity to pick up details of all the events.



#### Oct 18 ~ Nov 18

#### Kaifeng Chrysanthemum Fair

The Chrysanthemum Festival is a grand cultural activity organized by the Kaifeng Municipal Government for tourists to admire chrysanthemums and better understand the folklore of the capital during the Song dynasty. Every October, parks, scenic spots, streets and lanes display chrysanthemum of more than 200 species in over 500,000 pots. Other activities are also held at the same time, such as large scale performances, plate and drum dances, folk entertainments. local flavors and tourist commodity fairs.

26 Sept ~ 10 Oct

Shandong

#### **Qufu International Confucius Culture Festival**

The festival is to commemorate Confucius (a great educator and thinker in the Spring & Autumn period (770 - 221 B.C.) because the 27th day of the eighth lunar month is his birthday, a grand memorial ceremony is held in the hometown of Confucius — Qufu. The opening ceremony of the festival is characterized by the ancient sacrificing dances that

attract many visitors. Many exhibitions such as calligraphy and the Cemetery of Confucius (Kong Lin) can be seen during the festival. In addition, visitors can tour in The Kong Family Mansion (Kong Fu) and Temple of Confucius (Kong Miao). The local marriage customs can also be seen and authentic Shandong cuisine can be tasted.



### READERSHIP SURVEY

Our readers' ideas and opinions are important to us. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Your responses will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine. Thank you!



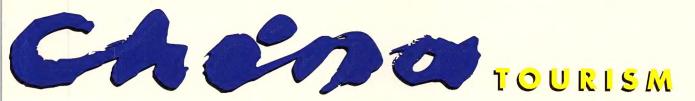
1.	What	did	you	enjoy	about	this	issue	(E311)	and	why?
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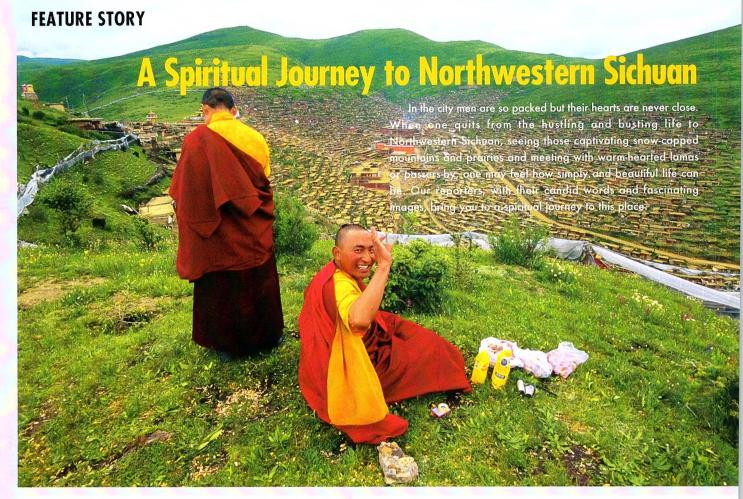
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#### On the Way

#### **Making Artefacts in Yunnan**

When the Chinese are talking about learning abroad, foreigners might have greater interest in learning new skills in mainland China. Why not choose Yunnan, an exotic province situating in Southwest China? Our correspondents introduce many unique workshops to learn the ancient making of Dongba paper, to appreciate Sanskrit music, creating clay figures, making of Tibetan bronze knives, etc. Of course, you may still have your time in westernised bar streets in Yunnan at night!

#### Culture

#### The New Museum of Suzhou

The brand-new Suzhou Museum designed by I.M.Pei was completed in October 2006, covering over 10,700 square metres and located at the cross of Dongbei Street and Qimen Road. It is divided into three sections. The centre includes the entrance, the hall and the main garden, the West Wing is exhibition area and the East Wing belongs to administration offices and education area. The layout of three axes is matching the style of Prince Zhong's Mansion. The whitewashed plaster wall with dark gray clay tile is the construction characteristic of Suzhou. The new museum adopts it as the primary

colours. Instead of using traditional clay tiles, the roof is made of grey granites with uniformed colours. Modern steel structure is applied to the new museum to replace traditional roof beam structure.

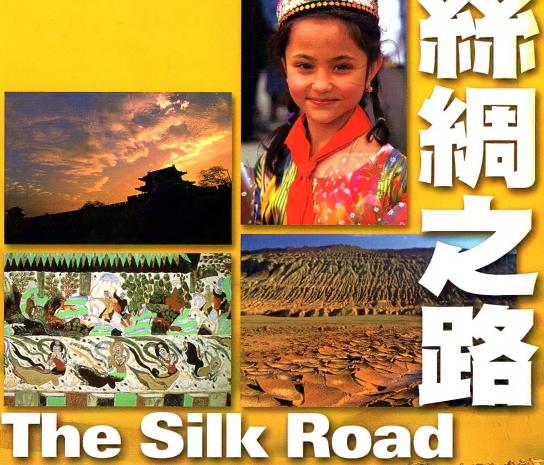




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